Abingdon
VIRGINIA

Comprehensive Plan 2020

DRAFT July 23, 2020

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

- Purpose
- Planning Process
- Vision 2040
- Community Goals

With a unique place in the history and culture of Southwest Virginia, the Town of Abingdon has a duty to plan for a prosperous future that protects local assets and respects the needs and desires of its residents. One of Abingdon's primary tools in this long-range planning is the Town's Comprehensive Plan. Begun in 2019 and completed in 2020, this document is an update to a previous Comprehensive Plan adopted in 2013.

PURPOSE

In Virginia, every governing body with zoning must adopt a comprehensive plan to provide direction for the physical development of land within its jurisdiction. The plan is used as a guide for public investment and decisions, as well as to provide the legal foundation for important land-management tools like zoning and subdivision ordinances. The plan also lays the foundation for future public facilities like roads, utilities, and parks. Legally, the plan controls the general location, character and extent of various features, including streets, parks, public buildings, utilities, etc.; new features must be approved by the local planning commission as being substantially in accordance with the adopted comprehensive plan. The Abingdon Planning Commission is responsible for developing the comprehensive plan and reviewing it every five years for any necessary amendments. Once endorsed by the Planning Commission, the plan is recommended to Abingdon Town Council for adoption as a guiding public document.

This comprehensive plan is an update to the Town's 2013 Comprehensive Plan. It updates and builds on that plan to provide guiding policies for various planning elements and to recommend specific implementation measures for achieving the vision and goals developed through community participation and the diligent work of Town staff and community leaders.

PLANNING PROCESS

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

This comprehensive plan was developed using citizen input obtained through a public survey, public workshops and a series of design work sessions, all under the guidance of the Abingdon Planning Commission. To be successful, the plan will require partnership efforts that involve a diversity of stakeholders, including elected leaders, local government administrators, citizens, business owners, community organizations, and state agencies.

A kickoff meeting was held on January 28, 2019 and had 9 community stakeholders present. Town staff, Elected Officials, and the consultant team went on a community tour that included stops at several key sites including the Abingdon Muster Grounds, the Stone Mill Technology Park, downtown and Plumb Alley, the Creeper Trail trailhead, the Coomes Recreation Center and school district campus, and the highway commercial development around exits 14, 17, and 19. Following the tour, the consulting team facilitated a discussion with community stakeholders to talk about opportunities and challenges for the area.

The Town administered a citizen survey from February to March of 2019, giving the community an opportunity to participate in the Comprehensive Plan process. With 450 survey responses, participants answered questions about the Town's priorities, shortcomings, and what they believed growth should look like in the future. Respondents expressed both pro-growth and anti-growth attitudes, but agreed that small-town charm, history, and beauty are essential characteristics of Abingdon that must not be lost.

On May 7, 2019, the Town held a community meeting to share information with residents about the comprehensive plan purpose and update process, and to listen to resident's values and concerns about the future. Over 20 residents attended the meeting. The attendee discussed what they like about Abingdon and what they would change about Abingdon. Many people in the area have a high quality of life and pride in the Town. The things that they would change about Abingdon included creating a more vibrant downtown, more green space in town, and support more affordable housing.

The second steering committee meeting was held on May 8, 2019, and was used to consider public input via the citizen survey that was administered by the consultant team and recommend changes and additions to the current Comprehensive Plan vision statement and goals. They also discussed what changes it would like to see to the structure of the Plan. The existing plan has eight elements. The Committee agreed to generally keep the structure intact with two important changes. First, the land use element would be combined with the

People & Neighborhoods Element. Second, the Committee recommended a new element on tourism. The committee then ranked the element of the plan that need the most attention, and economic development got the most votes, followed by people, neighborhoods, and land use, and transportation.

In September, the consulting team facilitated another Steering Committee Meeting and Public meeting. The Steering Committee gathered around a large map of the town and discussed areas of the town that should change, be enhanced, or stay the same. Most of the committee had a preservation-centered mindset in order to keep the historic values of the town and also most of the comments that were made had to do with the revitalization of downtown within reason, improvements to exit ramps to make Abingdon more attractive from the highway, make the downtown easier to access with improved walkability, and improve connection to other areas surrounding Abingdon. The public forum had several stations set up with different maps asking residents where Abingdon should grow, what the growth should look like, and how to connect Abingdon to the surrounding areas. There was a visual preference survey provided to give residents a tangible look at how the growth in Abingdon should be in the future. The issue of connectivity was noted as a consistent theme. The desire for beautification and preservation of existing infrastructure was also shared.

As the Comprehensive Plan document was drafted in the spring of 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic dramatically impacted life in Abingdon and globally. The effects of this public health crisis immediately impacted the creation of the plan, changing plans for a public open house to introduce the plan and collect community feedback into online presentation and plan feedback prior to official plan adoption. More critically, the pandemic has had, and will have, dramatic consequences for a wide variety of businesses and activities that are important to the people and economy of the town. At the time of this writing these impacts on restaurants, lodging, festivals, and tourism, among others, cannot be fully know or quantified. As a result, this Comprehensive Plan focuses on existing data and descriptions of Abingdon as a place where tourism, community events, and other local forces will return in the future.

Throughout the Comprehensive Plan process, Town staff, consultants and Planning Commissioners participated in meetings with local committees, stakeholders, and the public to gather information and opinions that contribute to the vision and strategies of Abingdon's Comprehensive Plan.

VISION 2040

The Comprehensive Plan helps Town officials make decisions today with an eye towards the future. A compelling vision that represents the desires of our community is a critical component of the Comprehensive Plan. The community vision below represents how we together envision Abingdon 20 years on from the creation of this plan, in the year 2040, and from it flow the goals and strategies laid out in this plan.

Abingdon in 2040

Abingdon will be a community where residents want to stay and visitors want to return.
Through the cooperative efforts of citizens, businesses, and government, the Town in 2040 will be:

- **A Small Town with Big Quality of Life:** Abingdon will have a diverse population and economy with plenty of jobs that can support a family because we have focused on creating a high quality of life, which attracts talented people and prosperous businesses.
- **Southwest Virginia's Intersection of Arts and Nature:** Abingdon will continue to support its arts and cultural institutions, while growing and promoting outdoor recreation, to attract more tourists and enrich the lives of residents young and old.
- **A Town that Helps Businesses Start Up and Soar:** The Town will support businesses through its regulations, operations, and marketing, becoming a magnet for entrepreneurs and a place where they prosper for the long-term.
- **A Place that Embraces Preservation and Progress:** Abingdon will be both historic and renewed. The Town will encourage well-planned development to provide spaces for new business and activities, as well as resources needed to maintain historic sites.
- **A Connected, Walkable and Bikeable Small Town:** Abingdon's streets will be well-connected, well-served by public transit and safe and inviting for pedestrians and bicyclists of all ages, and everyone will have easy access to nature via an extensive trail network connected to the Creeper Trail.
- **Providing Housing for Every Stage of Life:** The Town will have a wide range of housing types and most growth will be accommodated through infill development close to shops and everyday needs, which reduces traffic.
- **A Town of Complete Neighborhoods:** Abingdon will have a thriving downtown and will be known for more than Main Street. We will have distinct neighborhoods with a mix of land uses, allowing people to learn, play, and work near their homes.
- **A Place where Everyone Feels Welcome and Included:** People will feel connected to their neighbors, have ample opportunities to participate in the Town's governance, and feel confident that nearly anything is possible in Abingdon.

COMMUNITY GOALS

The Town's goals, summarized in this section, build on Abingdon's vision for 2040 and expand the vision into a series of ideal end states that the Town aims to achieve by 2040. The goals and vision together are critical lenses for evaluating policies the Town may adopt and actions it may take to ensure that they are all heading in the same direction and building towards the long-term desired future.

The goals and vision are closely related, although the latter is more general and aspirational in spirit. The goals describe what Abingdon wants to accomplish; the vision describes why Abingdon wants to take steps to accomplish these goals. Finally, the vision and goals also shape the strategies policies and actions that are listed throughout this plan. Strategies are specific tasks and actions to be carried out by town staff, community organizations, and others, and represent how the Town will accomplish its goals and realize its vision.

WHY	WHAT	HOW
Vision – An aspirational and big picture statement of what the Town wants to be in the long-term.	**Goals** – General descriptions of what the Town aims to accomplish by 2040 in various topic areas.	**Strategies** – Steps the Town will take to achieve its goals, and ultimately its vision for the future.

The Town developed the vision and goals described in this chapter based on the values and concerns expressed by citizens through a citizen survey in early 2019 and during a community meeting on May 7, 2019. A project steering committee developed the vision statement and goals using this public input and recommended the draft versions of each to the Planning Commission and Town Council for adoption.

The Town has established goals for each element of the Comprehensive Plan. The subsequent chapters for each Comprehensive Plan element lay out more specific policies and actions for achieving the goals. It is important to emphasize the role of partnerships in achieving these goals. The Town will rely on public-private partnerships; a committed citizenry; and civic, business, and government leaders to help accomplish these goals.

PLAN ELEMENT	GOALS
People, Neighborhoods, and Land Use	• Abingdon will achieve well-planned, orderly growth by building on our assets, increasing walkability, and maintaining an exceptionally high quality of life. • Abingdon's neighborhoods will be attractive, safe, and offer a range of housing types that meet the needs of people across the income spectrum. • New infill development will be designed to fit the context of existing buildings while other new developments should follow best practices in town design that meet the current needs of the town. • Abingdon will accommodate most new growth through infill development of vacant or underutilized parcels, and reuse of existing buildings. • The Town's significant historic structures will be preserved and occupied by new uses that have helped to make their preservation economically viable while contributing to a vibrant downtown. • The Town will make clear its preferred form of development and use of land in all areas of the Town and look to its Comprehensive Plan to guide development-related decisions. • The Town's zoning and development standards will reflect the policies of the Comprehensive Plan.
Transportation	• It will be safe and easy for anyone to pedal, roll, stroll, or drive on Abingdon's streets through tamed traffic and expanded bicycle and pedestrian facilities. • Abingdon's street network will provide more route options for people to travel within and through the Town, to alleviate traffic congestion on major streets by aligning street design, law enforcement, and education to reduce speeding and truck traffic in the Town's historic district and on Main Street. • Public transportation will be a viable option for traveling to work and enable people to access daily needs and fully participate in society regardless of income or abilities.
Economic Development	• Abingdon will grow its economy by helping a wide range of local and regional entrepreneurs and businesses prosper. • The Town will attract larger established businesses looking to grow in Southwest Virginia in appropriate locations as planned and designated in the Comprehensive Plan. • Abingdon will continue improving its downtown and quality of life in order to make the Town a top destination for talented people and firms.
Parks, Recreation, and Open Space	• Abingdon's residents will have exceptional parks and recreational facilities in walking distance of their homes. • The Town's scenic open spaces and regional recreational facilities are important economic and social amenities that will be protected.

PLAN ELEMENT	GOALS
	• Abingdon will be known as a hub of outdoor recreation and regional trails, with a diverse array of opportunities available within and near the Town.
Arts, Culture, and History	• Abingdon will maintain its reputation for talented artisans, diverse cultural opportunities, and architectural and archaeological history. • Artists will be able to find affordable housing and studio space in Abingdon. • Abingdon will welcome both new and traditional forms of artistic expression. • The Town's standards for preservation will maintain the look and feel of its historic districts while allowing for economically viable reuse of the structures.
Tourism	• Abingdon will have a thriving tourism economy built upon three main pillars – the arts, history, and outdoor recreation. • The Town will have a wide variety of options, such as lodging, restaurants, experiences, retail, tours, and culinary events to meet the needs of visitors of all ages and interests. • Abingdon will invest in activities, amenities, and experiences to meet the changing needs for repeat and new travelers.
Environment and Quality of Life	• Abingdon will be a clean and healthy community that protects natural features through high environmental standards for public and private activities and the built environment. • New development will not detract from the authentic experience of enjoying Abingdon's most treasured assets, such as the historic Main Street and the Creeper Trail. • The protection of natural features and the use of "green" technologies, low-impact development methods and an active bicycle and pedestrian network will establish the town as a development and conservation model for other communities.
Public Utilities, Facilities, and Services	• Abingdon will provide quality, effective, and efficient public facilities and services to residents. • Public buildings will be exemplary in architecture and reflect best practices for site development while complementing the region's natural features and cultural heritage. • The Town government will provide outstanding customer service to citizens and businesses. • Abingdon will continue to be a safe community with high quality public safety services.

Chapter 2

PEOPLE, NEIGHBORHOODS, AND LAND USE

CHAPTER 2 - PEOPLE, NEIGHBORHOODS, AND LAND USE

PEOPLE, NEIGHBORHOODS, AND LAND USE

- Facts and Figures
    - Population Abingdon
    - Population Projections
    - Demographic Profile
    - Housing
    - Housing Affordability
- Existing Land Use
- Land Use Policy Areas
- Future Land Use
- Opportunities and Issues
    - Elm Street
    - Norfolk Street
    - Design Guidelines
    - Affordability
    - Zoning and Subdivision
    - Conservation Subdivisions
- Goals
- Strategies

The Town of Abingdon is the sum of its people and places. This chapter explores the demographics of Abingdon and the needs of the town's relatively small land area to provide for the needs of these people.

FACTS AND FIGURES

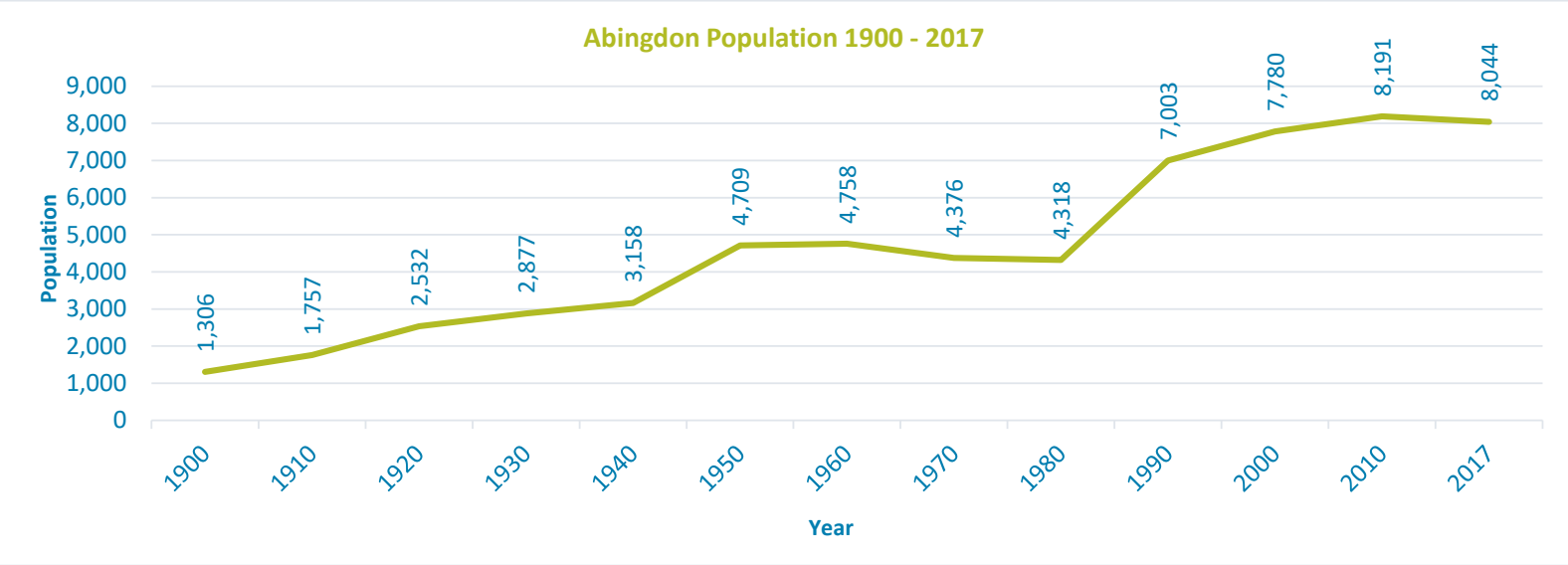
POPULATION

As the county seat of Washington County, Abingdon is the primary urban and cultural center, the regional center for health care, government and professional services, and a tourism destination for southwestern Virginia. Historic population trends for Abingdon from 1900 to 2017 are shown

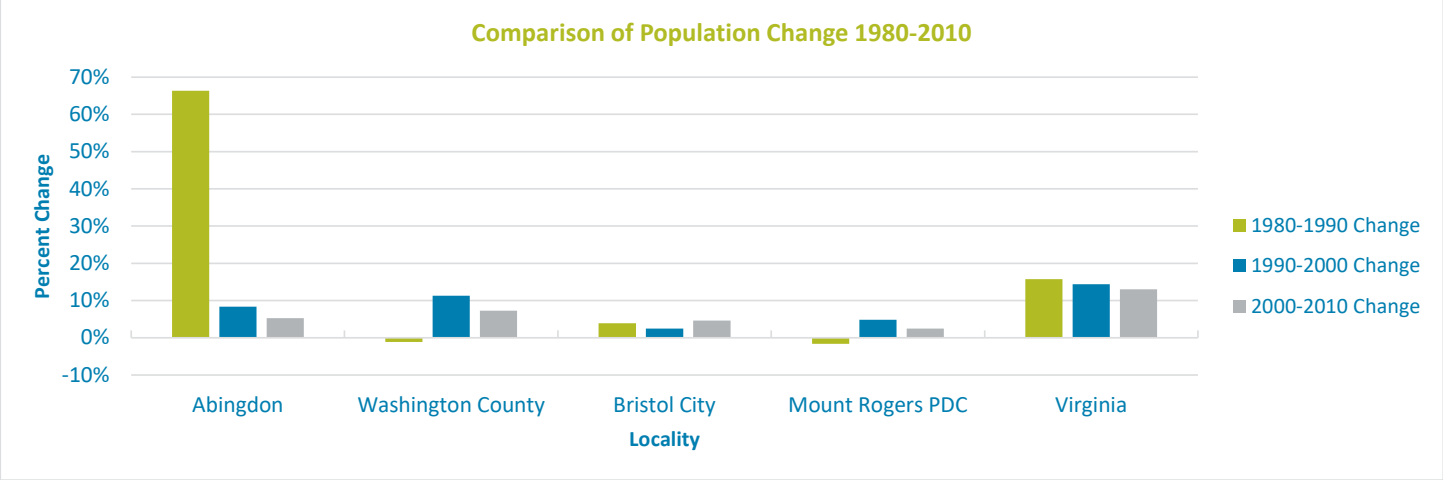
in the following table. Abingdon experienced considerable growth between 1900 and 1950. After 1950, growth of the town slowed and decreased in the following decades. In 1988, the town's population jumped by 2,700 people as a result of annexation. Abingdon's population then grew modestly during the 1990s and 2000s before declining slightly to a total population of 8,044 by 2017.

POPULATION PROJECTIONS

While accurately predicting future population change is far from reliable, projections maintained by the State of Virginia can help us to understand general trends and the effects of regional changes. Population projections prepared by the Virginia Employment Commission for 2020, 2030, and 2040 predict modest declines in overall town and regional populations as shown in the following table, while Washington County is expected to grow slightly. While actual population growth will be determined by a broad range of input inside and outside of the control of town government, these projections show a town and region that are not facing substantial growth pressure.



Sources: 2013-2017 ACS 5-Year Estimates
2010 Decennial Census



Sources: Decennial Census
Virginia Employment Commission

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

The following demographic profile gives some insight into the population of Abingdon, and how the town compares to the county that surrounds it. This information shows that Abingdon is slightly older population on average, with more residents over 65 and fewer residents under 19 than Washington County, a factor that can be due to housing preferences, recreation needs, consumer spending, among other measures. Increases in future employment may also affect the overall age of residents, with more working age and family households drawing down the average. Residents of Abingdon are slightly more racially diverse than residents of the county overall, and have higher overall levels of education, pointing to the town's roll as a center of health care, government, and business for its region.

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

The affordability of housing is a major concern for many. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development policy sets a benchmark for housing affordability at 30% of income spent on housing. By this measure approximately 30% of Abingdon renters and over 25% of mortgage-paying homeowners pay an unaffordable proportion of their income for housing. While these numbers are in line with other localities in the region and are lower than those in Virginia overall, they may not reflect those who did not settle in Abingdon because they could not find housing to meet their needs. In particular, the Barter Theatre reports that actors and others who make this unique and popular Abingdon attraction possible struggle to find adequate and affordable local housing.

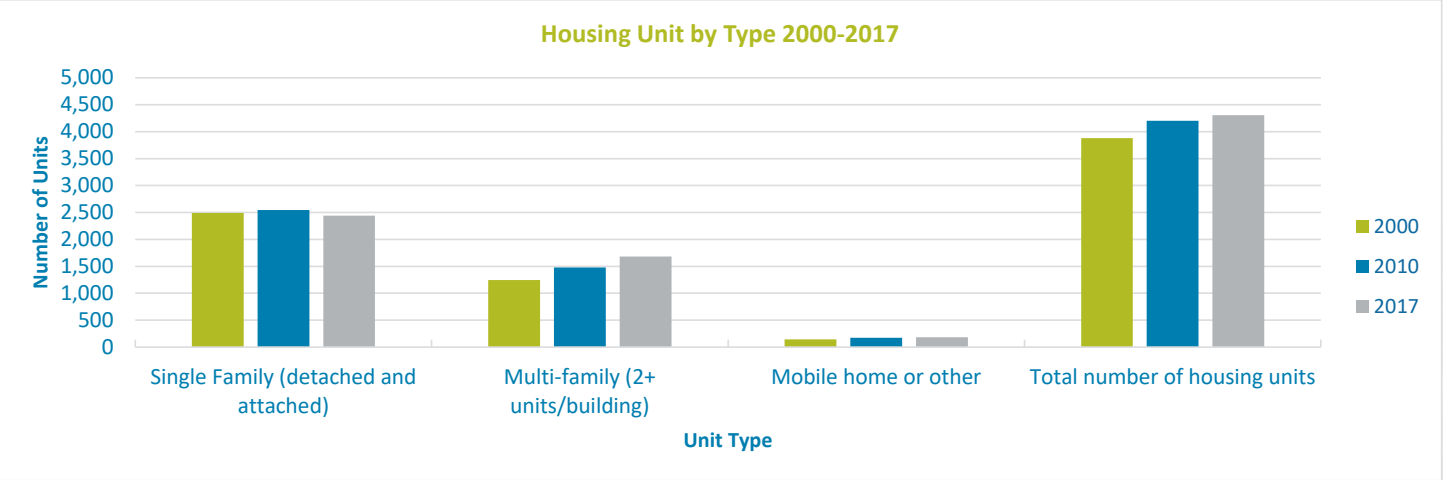
Locality	2017	2020	2030	2040
Abingdon	8,044	7,977	7,751	7,525
Washington County	54,457	53,365	54,997	55,838
Mount Rogers Planning District	190,667	188,401	187,740	184,512
Virginia	8,365,952	8,744,273	9,546,958	10,201,530

Sources: Weldon Cooper Center
Virginia Employment Commission Population Projections
2013-2017 ACS 5-Year Estimates

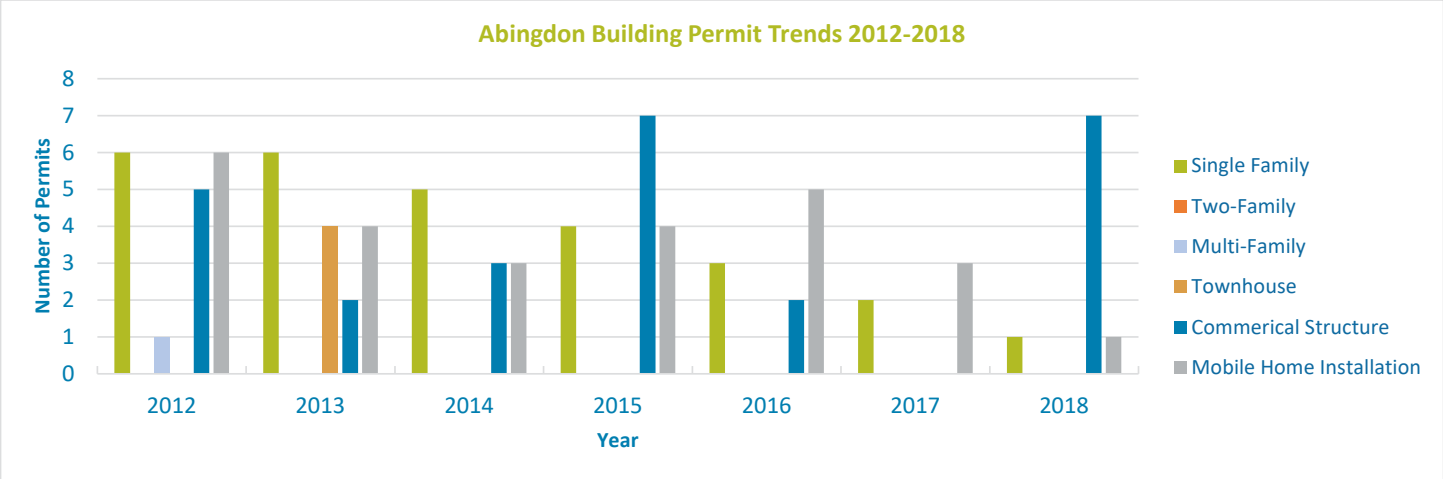
	Abingdon	%	Washington County	%
Population	8,044		54,457	
Male	3,909	48.6%	26,857	49.3%
Female	4,135	51.4%	27,600	50.7%
Age				
Under 20	1,430	17.8%	11,591	21.3%
20-64	4,871	60.6%	31,458	57.8%
65 and Over	1,743	21.7%	11,471	21.1%
Median Age	45.7		45.5	
Race & Ethnicity				
White	7,523	93.5%	52,420	96.3%
Black	279	3.5%	774	1.4%
Other	242	3.0%	1263	2.3%
Total Households	3,883		22,388	
Family-Households	1,893	48.8%	15,019	67.1%
Non-Family Households	1,990	51.2%	7,369	32.0%
Average Household Size	2.01		2.63	
Median Household Income	38,338		44,844	
Families Below Poverty Level	164.7	8.70%	1,501.9	10%
Residence in Past Year				
Same House	6380	84.2%	47,021	91%
Different House, Washington County	757	10.0%	2,925	5.7%
Different House, U.S.	378	5.0%	1,618	3.1%
Elsewhere	62	0.82%	163	0.32%
Educational Attainment 25 Years and Over	6,300		39882	
Less than 9th Grade	328	5.20%	2,658	6.7%
9th-12th Grade No Diploma	379	6.00%	3,495	8.8%
High School Graduate	1,566	24.90%	12,914	32.4%
Some College	1,360	21.60%	7,875	19.7%
Associates Degree	622	9.90%	3,593	9%
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	1,189	18.90%	5,780	14.5%
Graduate or Professional Degree	856	13.60%	3,567	8.9%

Sources: 2013-2017 ACS 5-Year Estimates

HOUSING



Sources: 2000 Decennial Census
2006-2010 ACS 5-Year Estimates
2013-2017 ACS 5-Year Estimates



Source: Town of Abingdon

EXISTING LAND USE

A majority of the existing land in the town is in residential or agricultural/forest/open space use. A reasonable amount of land is in business use, which is beneficial to maintaining cost-effective public services and a diversified economy. In general, the commercial land uses follow the existing transportation systems and the historical development pattern of the town. The following table provides more detailed information on the acreages by existing land use category.

	Abingdon	%	Washington County	%	Virginia	%
Homeowner Households with a Mortgage	1,095	- -	8,585	- -	1,424,741	- -
Paying < 30% of income toward mortgage	811	74.1%	6,437	75.0%	106,545	72.1%
Paying > 30% of income toward mortgage	284	25.9%	2,148	25.0%	290,481	27.9%
Rented Housing Units	1,944	- -	5,462	- -	976,036	- -
Paying < 30% of income toward rent	1,349	69.4%	3,514	64.3%	91,506	51.1%
Paying > 30% of income toward rent	595	30.6%	1,948	35.7%	385,876	48.9%

Source: 2013-2017 ACS 5-Year Estimates

LAND USE POLICY AREAS

Land Use Policy Areas are used to assess the character and stability of the many neighborhoods and areas of Abingdon. Stable areas with attractive architecture, well-maintained buildings, and already fitting the general goals of this Comprehensive Plan should be preserved as they are and infilled where possible with compatible buildings and land uses. Areas in need of improvement, or areas having undesirable

Land Use Category	Acreage	%
Agricultural/ Forest/ Open Space/ Undeveloped/ Recreation	824	16%
Low-Density Residential	906	18%
Medium-Density Residential	1,449	29%
High-Density Residential	101	2%
Office/ Commercial/ I-81 ROW	848	17%
Business/ Technology/ Industrial	321	6%
Public/ Institutional	516	10%
Cemetery	87	2%
Town of Abingdon	5,052	100%

land uses, should be welcoming to revitalization or redevelopment projects that bring these areas closer to the town's expressed vision.

The Land Use Policy Area map is a precursor and companion to the Future Land Use map where specific uses and densities for future land use are established.

Downtown Preservation and Infill
Maintain the dense, walkable core that does so much to define Abingdon's character, and to attract visitors to enjoy that character. Capitalize on any opportunities to expand this vital area by remaking adjacent automobile-oriented commercial areas into walkable mixed-use areas that support the downtown.

- New land uses: Add residential uses to the downtown, such as apartments above shops, to promote vitality and keep the area active throughout daytime and evening hours.
- Infill development: Fill any empty lots or other available spaces with buildings that match the scale, design, and character of the downtown.
- Design Guidelines: Guidelines can help to maintain a unique Abingdon look and feel even as buildings are built or redeveloped.

Neighborhood Preservation and Infill
Stable, healthy neighborhoods are an asset to the community and are prized in many instances for their design, landscaping, and character. Maintain the use, scale, and character of these existing healthy neighborhoods. Fill any available lots with homes that match the scale and character of surrounding homes, while using design regulations or guidelines to support neighborhood character.

- Infill development: Fill any available lots with homes that match the scale and character of surrounding homes.
- Design Guidelines: Use design guidelines or regulations to support neighborhood character.

Neighborhood Revitalization
Some neighborhoods require improvements to meet the character and quality of life goals of Abingdon. Issues including vacancy, value, property maintenance, and connection to the downtown should be improved as these areas change and grow. Use density bonuses or other provisions to promote the development of affordable housing in these places, favoring designs that include walkability and green space.

- New land uses: Introduce a variety of new residential uses in these select areas, including new town homes and multi-family dwellings.
- Redevelopment: Support the redevelopment of parcels in these select neighborhoods to create new neighborhoods that meet overall town goals.
- Design Guidelines: Guidelines can promote best practices in new developments including appropriate access, green space, walkability, and other factors while not necessarily enforcing replication of existing Abingdon architecture.

Commercial Area Stabilization and Infill
Support healthy commercial areas away from Abingdon's downtown and having low vacancy rates with landscaping, signage, and other improvements to increase their viability. Focus on highway services and daily needs of Abingdon-region residents.

- Infill development: Promote strategic infill of existing healthy commercial areas where possible to increase the density of these areas and promote the full use of appropriate lands.
- Design Guidelines: Use design guidelines or regulations to improve the look of key entrance corridors and mitigate undesirable commercial area features such as blank side and rear walls and unadorned parking lots.

Commercial Area Redevelopment
Aging, poorly maintained, or underutilized commercial development, including disused shopping centers or industrial sites, can become zones of new commercial investment that contributes to the town's employment and economic goals.

- Redevelopment: Promote the redevelopment of vacant, aging, or underutilized commercial space to include greater density.
- New land uses: New commercial development may include a broader range of uses including a mix of residential and commercial, and businesses that provide quality local employment.
- Design Guidelines: Guidelines can help to create commercial areas that make the best use of limited town land and offer attractive architecture, especially in Abingdon's key entrance corridors.

Rural Conservation
Support the preservation of farmland and traditional agricultural activities that add to the rural character of Abingdon and its region, as well as other open spaces that are an asset to the town's people and environment, focusing especially on parcels visible from Interstate 81 and adjacent to the Virginia Creeper Trail. Promote programs and alternative uses that allow owners of rural lands to make valuable use of their land without developing typical subdivisions. Establish other guidelines that protect the architecture and site design that is unique to rural and agricultural spaces.

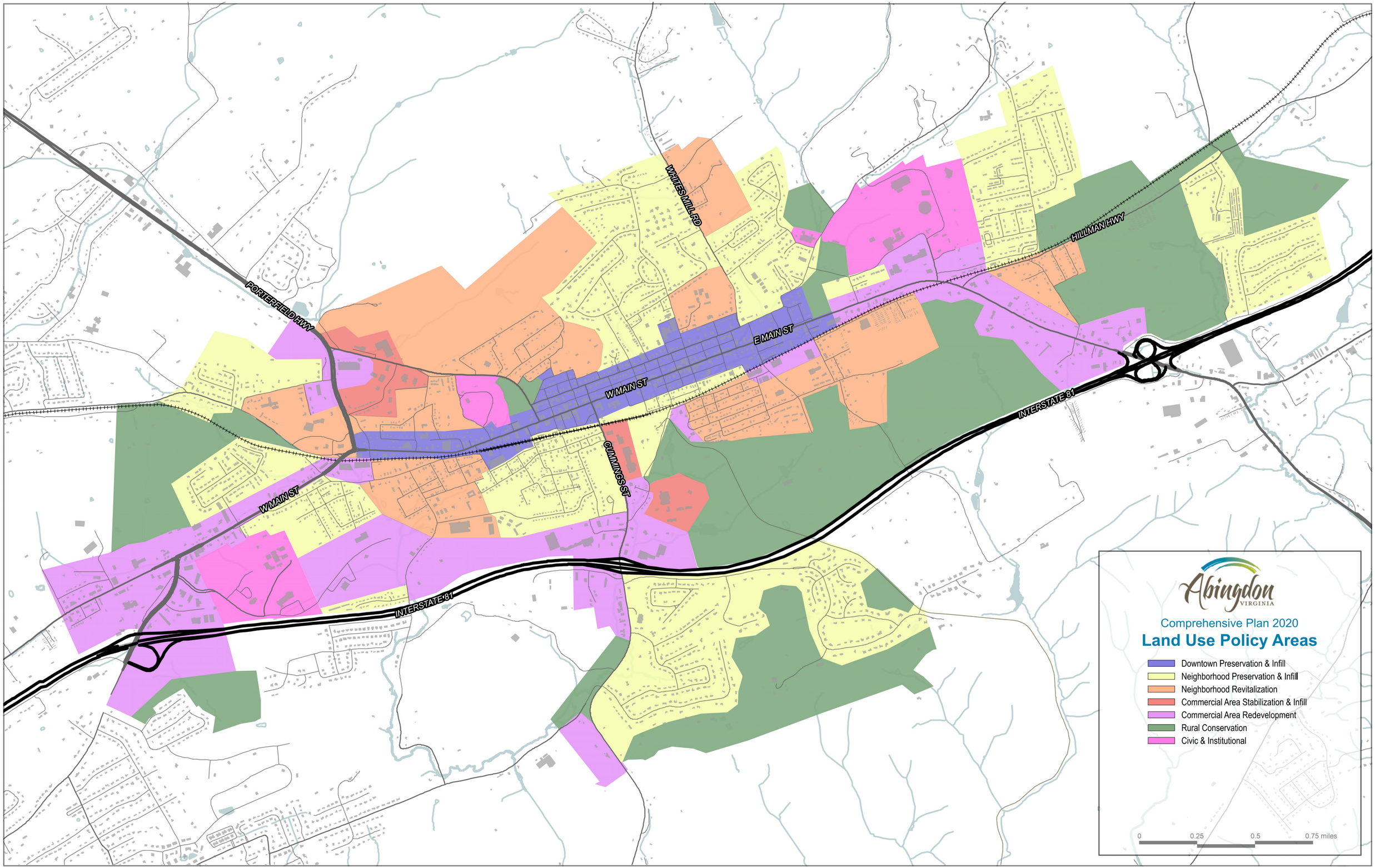
Civic and Institutional
Provide for the maintenance and expansion of government facilities, schools, churches, and other public and civic spaces, connecting them with pedestrian and other accommodations to be more accessible and useful to residents and visitors, and to contribute to the unique look and character of Abingdon.

SUMMARY OF LAND USE POLICY AREAS

Land Use Policy Areas are used to assess the character and stability of the many neighborhoods and areas of Abingdon. Stable areas with attractive architecture, well-maintained buildings, and already fitting the general goals of this Comprehensive Plan should be preserved as they are and infilled where possible with compatible buildings and land uses. Areas in need of improvement, or areas having undesirable land uses, should be welcoming to revitalization or redevelopment projects that bring these areas closer to the town's expressed vision.

The Land Use Policy Area map is a precursor and companion to the Future Land Use map where specific uses and densities for future land use are established.

	Introduce New Land Uses or Densities	Promote Infill Development Where Appropriate	Redevelop Existing Buildings with Appropriate Uses	Establish Design Guidelines
Downtown Preservation-Infill	●	●		●
Neighborhood Preservation-Infill		●		●
Neighborhood Revitalization	●		●	●
Commercial Stabilization-Infill		●		●
Commercial Redevelopment	●		●	●
Open Space				●
Civic-Institutional				●


Abingdon
VIRGINIA
Comprehensive Plan 2020
Land Use Policy Areas
Downtown Preservation & Infill
Neighborhood Preservation & Infill
Neighborhood Revitalization
Commercial Area Stabilization & Infill
Commercial Area Redevelopment
Rural Conservation
Civic & Institutional
0
0.25
0.5
0.75 miles
PORTERFIELD HWY
WHITES MILL RD
HILLMAN HWY
E MAIN ST
W MAIN ST
W MAIN ST
CUMMINGS ST
INTERSTATE 81
INTERSTATE 81

FUTURE LAND USE

A future land use map for Abingdon is included in this plan. This map was developed through analysis and evaluation of the elements of this comprehensive plan, including existing land use, development opportunities, and planned improvements to transportation and infrastructure. The future land use reflects the policies and initiatives discussed in this plan and should be used to guide future land use and zoning decisions.

It will also provide guidance for extending public facilities such as utilities, roads and other public improvements. The following table provides more detailed information on the recommended future land use. As can be seen in comparing the existing and the future land use tables, the future land use is reflective in general of the existing land use and development patterns in Abingdon. Greater attention is given to encouraging higher density residential development and infill within the center of town and to encouraging conservation methods for residential development in the town's perimeter as a way to strengthen the character, appearance, and usability of Abingdon and improve its economic future.

The land use categories shown on the map are described in the following paragraphs. These descriptions provide guidance for amending land use regulations in the future and for encouraging the type of land development desired for Abingdon in 2040.

Agricultural and Conservation
Select areas, mostly around Abingdon's perimeter, remain in farm, forest, and open space uses. These lands are important environmental assets to Abingdon and, in large measure, help to define the look, feel, and character of the town while tying Abingdon to the rural and agricultural tradition of the region. Land in the Agriculture and Conservation category may also contain sensitive topographic areas that contribute to local viewsheds and overall environmental health that should be protected. The future use of these areas should include open space, farms, estate homes, or clustered residential development that permanently conserves open space as a part of its overall development design.

Low-Density Residential
Low-density residential areas include most of Abingdon's existing residential neighborhoods and include single family homes on lots of varying size. This pattern of development will be appropriate in the future as infill development within existing neighborhoods like Taylor's Hill and Kings Mountain neighborhoods, and in select areas where location, access, topography, or adjacent land uses would make higher density development inappropriate. The density of new residential development in this land use category should range from 2-4 dwelling units per acre.

Medium-Density Residential
Medium-Density Residential includes existing townhouse and small multi-family residential developments, as well as areas where future development of these uses is appropriate due to the property's access to public water and sewer facilities, transportation access, or proximity to Abingdon's downtown and other areas of activity. Land uses in these areas may include single family homes, townhouses, apartments, or condos and should be of high design quality, including appropriate architecture, landscaping, transportation connectivity, and community spaces. Residential densities for this land use category should range from 6-12 dwelling units per acre.

High-Density Residential
High-Density Residential includes densely development multi-family properties, whether developed as apartments for rent or condos for sale. Future development of this type will be appropriate in select areas of redevelopment near Abingdon's downtown or in outlying areas near major employers and having excellent transportation access and access to public water and sewer systems. In additional to multi-family residential these areas may also include townhouses or live/work units as a part of a master planned development. Because these areas would be densely developed, it is essential that they be well designed, provide sufficient green/open spaces, and be complementary to the architecture and context of adjacent land uses. Residential densities for this land use category should range from 6-16 dwelling units per acre.

Mixed-Use Residential/Commercial
Mixed-Use Residential/Commercial applies to areas adjacent to Abingdon's downtown where land uses have historically included both residential and light commercial or office uses. Future development in these areas will include infill and small redevelopment projects and should meet strict architectural standards for both the building and site layout with an aim to maintain the unique character and residential look of these areas. Land uses should be compatible with one another and should not require large parking areas or large signs. Land uses is these areas should include homes, small offices, and live/work units.

Central Business District/Downtown
This land use category applies to Abingdon's unique and historic downtown and aims to preserve and revitalize this area through building rehabilitation, adaptive reuse, and infill development that fits the scale, design, and character of the area. Downtown land uses should include retail, office, service, entertainment, and food service, and hotel uses as well as introduce and expand upper-story residential uses that contribute to the activity and vitality of the area.

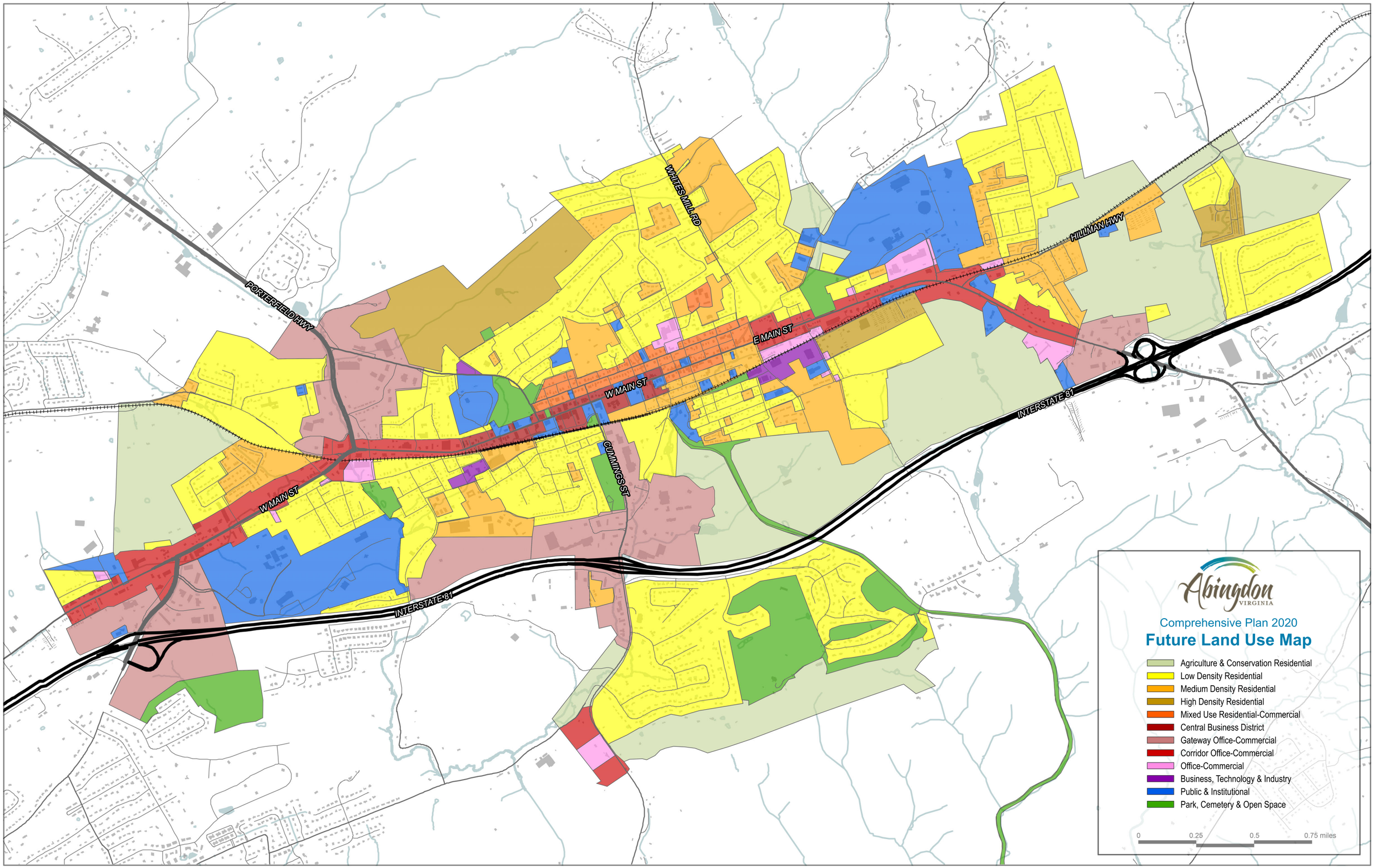
Gateway Office/Commercial
Abingdon's gateways are found along major roadways and at Interstate exits as travelers enter the town. In many cases these important areas form the first impression of tourists and potential contributors to Abingdon's town life and economy. In many cases though these areas are defined by aging commercial strips and national chain businesses that do not reflect the character and traditions of Abingdon. New development and redevelopment in these areas should continue the retail, restaurant, office, service, and planned shopping center uses currently found here, and may add new residential, institutional, or cultural uses, but should be improved to contribute to a unique first impression that suits the character of Abingdon. New development should include substantial landscaping, coordinated access points, minimal signage and lighting, and be complimentary to adjacent development in keeping with adopted design guidelines established by the town.

Corridor Office/Commercial
Applying primarily to East and West Main Street outside of Abingdon's downtown core, this area includes smaller scale retail, office, restaurant, and business/personal service land uses than are typically found in Gateway areas, but includes site designs that are more automobile-oriented than the downtown commercial area. The Corridor Office/Commercial area works as a transition between downtown business and highway business. These areas continue the need to provide quality design and attractive landscaping along paths leading to the downtown. Rehabilitations and infill development should be architecturally appropriate, include landscaping, and be designed to enhance the appearance of the corridor.

Business, Technology, and Industrial
The Business, Technology, and Industrial zone is used to define planned business developments like the Stone Mill Business Park and should include a range of light manufacturing, office, and technology businesses that contribute to the economy and employment landscape of Abingdon and surrounding areas while not contributing pollution of other adverse effects that might harm the health and character that defines the town. New development in these areas should be in accordance with adopted design guidelines.

Public and Institutional
Abingdon is an important hub of government, civic, and institutional uses for its region and space should be allocated to allow the continued operation and eventual expansion of these uses to prevent their relocation outside of the town. Existing and future land uses in these areas should include schools, recreation facilities, government offices, health care facilities, places of worship, and the homes of other civic organizations. Large facilities should be developed in keeping with adopted master plans and design guidelines proposed by the town to ensure the coordination of landscaping, lighting, site design, architecture, and other elements with the character of Abingdon.

Recreation and Open Space
This land use category applies to existing and proposed public parks and dedicated public trails. Such spaces are an essential ingredient in the quality of life of residents of Abingdon and of the larger region. Recreation and Open Space land uses should be located in proximity to the town's neighborhoods and ensure that these uses have the space they need to operate comfortably and efficiently, as well as allow room to expand as needs grow.


PORTERFIELD HWY
WHITES MILL RD
HILLMAN HWY
E MAIN ST
W MAIN ST
W MAIN ST
CUMMINGS ST
INTERSTATE 81
INTERSTATE 81
Abingdon
VIRGINIA
Comprehensive Plan 2020
Future Land Use Map
Agriculture & Conservation Residential
Low Density Residential
Medium Density Residential
High Density Residential
Mixed Use Residential-Commercial
Central Business District
Gateway Office-Commercial
Corridor Office-Commercial
Office-Commercial
Business, Technology & Industry
Public & Institutional
Park, Cemetery & Open Space
0
0.25
0.5
0.75 miles

OPPORTUNITIES AND ISSUES

ELM STREET

As Abingdon looks to infill development in or near the downtown to meet the majority of future development needs, individual sites such as the industrial area near Depot Square between Fuller and Preston Streets, north of Elm Street may be targets for redevelopment. The Elm Street redevelopment area could include both residential and commercial development to complement the future revitalization efforts in Depot Square and downtown. The conceptual sketch shown below proposes single-family houses on a tree-lined street with sidewalk on Elm and two buildings with live-work spaces offering retail or galleries along with upper-story apartments.

NORFOLK STREET

Existing mobile home sites in Abingdon are aging and may provide opportunities to redevelop such parcels into high-density residential communities or a mix of other residential types. In particular, the industrial development and mobile home park along Norfolk Street and south of the railroad presents an opportunity for residential development of significant size with proximity to schools, shopping, downtown, and other important attractors. While mobile homes do provide needed affordable housing, they do not provide equity to residents and do not meet the character of the town. Instead, Abingdon may look to redevelopment that incorporates owned or rented affordable housing units via partnerships with community organizations such as Habitat for Humanity, or through incentives including density bonuses for affordable housing.

DESIGN GUIDELINES

Abingdon's attraction as a place to live, work, and visit is due in large part to the appearance and character of the town, from the architecture of its buildings to the walkability of its streets. For this reason, it is of paramount importance that large new developments, infill projects, and redevelopment efforts all fit with the image of Abingdon. While this does not mean that every new building should imitate the traditional architecture of the downtown, it does mean that the look and scale of any development should be carefully designed to meet the needs and character of the town. To accomplish this Abingdon should work to develop new, or improve existing, advisory design guidelines that are specific to key areas of the town including entrance corridors, the downtown, key neighborhoods, and other zones.

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

The Abingdon Redevelopment and Housing Authority was formed in 1970 to assist low-income town residents with affordable housing options. The Housing Authority offers rental assistance to approximately 120 low-income families and owns and manages 28 public housing units In the Town. The Town should increase its coordination with the Redevelopment and Housing Authority, and the promoting of subsidized housing, but must also address housing affordability broadly. Abingdon should look for infill development sites where smaller units and higher housing densities can reduce land cost, offering more variety to meet the needs of more consumers in both rental and ownership markets. Ideal sites should be in walkable areas of the Town, reducing transportation costs for renters and homeowners along with housing costs, and may be combined with other housing types, styles, and prices in mixed-income developments.

REVISE ZONING/SUBDIVISION

In defining a vision and goals through the process of revising this Comprehensive Plan, the Town of Abingdon should continue to look for avenues to reinforce and realize its

vision and goals in day-to-day town actions and decision making. Perhaps the most important way that the guidance of the Comprehensive Plan will meet day-to-day application is in the town's zoning and subdivision ordinances. While the Comprehensive Plan offers non-regulatory guidance on future growth, these ordinances are the legal regulation that will shape future development. Following the guidance of the Comprehensive Plan Abingdon should work to revise its zoning and subdivision regulations, examining each district and provision to ensure that desirable development characteristics are legally supported and easiest to accomplish.

CONSERVATION SUBDIVISIONS

Despite the enormous environmental, cultural, and aesthetic value of remaining rural and agricultural lands within the town, Abingdon's agricultural zoning district continues to allow residential development on lots as small as one acre in these areas. While downzoning property to decrease this density may not be desirable, the town can introduce regulations that provide more attractive alternatives to conventional subdivisions. Conservation subdivisions allow similar residential density overall but cluster smaller lots on portions of large open space tracts and permanently preserve other areas of the parcel as common open space or as active farmland to preserve green space and rural character.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

1. Abingdon will achieve well-planned, orderly growth by building on our assets, increasing walkability, and maintaining an exceptionally high quality of life.

1.1. Follow the publicly generated guidance of this Comprehensive Plan, and other strategic documents, in considering approval of any development or redevelopment proposal.
1.2. Locate any new civic uses, including parks, libraries, and schools, in locations easily accessed from residential areas, and using existing buildings before creating new ones.

2. Abingdon's neighborhoods will be attractive, safe, and offer a range of housing types that meet the needs of people across the income spectrum.

2.1. Encourage well designed, diversified, affordable housing in Abingdon through public-private partnerships, and close coordination with housing agencies.
2.2. Create development regulations that match the goals for neighborhood preservation and neighborhood revitalization areas found in this plan.

3. New infill development will be designed to fit the context of existing buildings while other new developments should follow best practices in town design that meet the current needs of the town.

3.1. Adopt development regulations that help to minimize impacts on environmental features and viewsheds and encourage sensitive land development and best management practices.
3.2. Create design guidelines for all major areas of Abingdon that provide clear input on best practices to owners and investors.

4. Abingdon will accommodate most new growth through infill development on vacant or underutilized parcels, and reuse of existing buildings.

4.1. Develop marketing materials for specific infill development and redevelopment opportunities, making them available to interested businesses and economic development agencies.

5. The Town's significant historic structures will be preserved and occupied by new uses that have helped to make their preservation economically viable while contributing to a vibrant downtown.

5.1. Consider financial incentives such as façade improvement assistance, special housing loans, or other programs to facilitate investment in downtown buildings for mixed use.

6. The Town will make clear its preferred form of development and use of land in all areas of the Town and look to its Comprehensive Plan to guide development-related decisions.

6.1. Plan and develop new neighborhoods using best practices in town when located in densely developed areas and conservation and clustered development principles in more rural areas of Abingdon.
6.2. Continue to protect key viewsheds from development, including discouraging development of rural parcels directly visible from Interstate 81.

7. The Town's zoning and development standards will reflect the policies of the Comprehensive Plan.

7.1. Amend the subdivision ordinance to provide provisions for clustered residential development to conserve open space and natural features. Ensure that the provisions include appropriate guidelines for development patterns, environmental protection, community open spaces/facilities, and other appropriate measures.
7.2. Amend the town's zoning ordinance and zoning map to reflect the goals and development recommendations set forth in this comprehensive plan, including the promotion of mixed use infill development, protection of historic districts, and promotion of high-quality new development that matches the character of Abingdon.

Chapter 3

TRANSPORTATION

CHAPTER 3 - TRANSPORTATION

TRANSPORTATION

- Facts and Figures (Existing System)
    - Street Classification and Traffic
    - Pedestrian and Bicycle Transportation
    - Other Transportation
- Future System
    - Street Policies
    - Projects
    - Six-Year Improvement Plan
- Opportunities and Issues
    - Street Extensions
    - Truck Traffic
    - Pedestrian and Bicycle Connectivity
    - Road Beautification
    - Public Transit
- Goals
- Strategies

Abingdon has a rich history as a major transportation crossroads. In its beginnings, the community was located on the Wilderness Road, an early trail for pioneers and western settlers. Later, U.S. Route 11 (East and West Main Street) accommodated vehicular traffic, following the alignment of the Wilderness Road. Today, I-81 passes to the south of Abingdon, providing easy access for residents and visitors to much of Southwest Virginia. Porterfield Highway serves as a major north transportation corridor to adjacent counties.

In 2003, Abingdon adopted a Historic District Entrance Corridor Overlay District to achieve an enhanced land development pattern and retain the town's historic character. New development within entrance corridors leading to the historic district must meet design standards for landscaping, signage, architecture, lighting, and site planning and be approved by the Planning Commission. This district has been very successful in protecting existing development patterns and regulating new development in entrance corridors; however, additional design guidance and illustrations are needed to assist applicants in understanding and meeting requirements, and to ensure consistency in the review of projects.

As part of the comprehensive planning effort, a design palette of furnishings was developed for Abingdon that matched the diversity of street types. For downtown, streets should be pedestrian friendly with well-coordinated streetlights, benches, trash receptacles, and brick sidewalks. Additional improvements recommended for downtown include additional streetlights, and matching trash receptacles, planters, and benches.

For the gateway entry corridors which are more oriented to vehicles, a streetscape palette was selected that includes concrete sidewalks, cobra-style streetlights, and matching trash receptacles and benches. Landscaping of the corridors is recommended in accordance with the gateway corridor plans.

EXISTING TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS

STREET CLASSIFICATION AND TRAFFIC

Abingdon is served by a system of streets, roads, and highways from major interstates to narrow residential streets. Some of these streets are a part of the Virginia Department of Transportation Functional Classification system, made up of main roads and important through-routes. These routes are noted below by their classification and with traffic counts noted.

Interstate
Interstates are the highest classification and are roadways classified as interstates are limited access, divided highways with the highest level of mobility.
Interstate 81
SCL Abingdon to SR 75 - 45,000 trips per day
Other Principal Arterials
In rural areas, Other Principal Arterials serve corridor movements of substantial statewide or interstate travel and provides an integrated network without stub connections (dead ends).
Main Street
SR 140 Jonesboro to Colonial Road - 22,000 trips per day
Porterfield Highway
Lee Hwy to Alt US 58 - 15,000 trips per day
Minor Arterials
In rural areas, Minor Arterials link cities and large towns, along with other major traffic generators, and form an integrated network providing interstate and inter-county service. The design in rural areas typically provides for relatively high overall speeds, with minimum interference to the through movement.
Main Street
WCL Abingdon to SR 140 Jonesboro Road - 7,200 trips per day
US ALT 58, Russell Road to Cummings St - 10,000 trips per day
Thompson Drive to Hillman Hwy-17,000 trips per day
Russel Road
US 19 Porterfield Highway to Valley St - 8,100 trips per day
Cummings Street
US 11 to I-81-16,000 trips per day
W Main St to Valley St-6,500 trips per day

PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE TRANSPORTATION

As an alternative to traditional vehicular transportation, other modes of transportation are also important to the future success and

Major Collector
Major Collector routes are longer in length; have lower connecting driveway densities; have higher speed limits; are spaced at greater intervals; have higher annual average traffic volumes; and may have more travel lanes than minor collectors may. In rural areas, Major Collectors provide service to any county seat not on an arterial system, to larger towns not directly served by higher systems.
Green Spring Road
SCL Abingdon Country Club to 1-81 Commerce Drive - 7400 trips per day
VHCC Drive
SR 140 Jonesboro Road to VHCC Parking Lot - 1800 trips per day
Thompson Drive
S 11 Main St to Stanley St - 4,100 trips per day
Valley Street
Russel Road to Court St - 8,400 trips per day
Court St to White Mills Rd - 6,000 trips per day
Tanner Street
Main St to Valley St - 1,300 trips per day
White Mills Road
Valley St to New NCL Abingdon - 1,900 trips per day
Hillman Hwy
Lee Hwy NCL to Abingdon - 4,000 trips per day
Old Saltworks Road
Hillman Hwy to NCL Abingdon - 1,400 trips per day
Minor Collector
In rural areas, minor collectors are spaced at intervals, consistent with population density. Minor Collectors collect traffic from local roads and bring all developed areas within a reasonable distance of a collector road. Minor Collector facilities provide service to the remaining smaller communities and link local traffic generators with their rural hinterland.
Wyndale Road
WCL Abingdon to US 11 Main St - 3,500 trips per day

sustainability of Abingdon. Trails, bicycle routes, and sidewalks offer great opportunities for alternative transportation. In downtown and the historic district, safe and convenient pedestrian and bicycle facilities add to the economic and social success of Abingdon. Residents and tourists are able to access a variety of establishments and facilities without using a car. Additionally, local residents working in downtown can walk to work. The ability to work, live, and play in a community is truly something to celebrate and market to potential residents and businesses.

An existing Pedestrian Safety and Movement Study was prepared in an effort to improve pedestrian continuity, control vehicular patterns, decrease the conflicts between pedestrians and motorists, and provide alternate routes for pedestrians and vehicular traffic. The study identified a need for pedestrian safety improvements at: the Barter Theatre, Cummings Street and Main Street, the Courthouse area, and the entire length of Valley Street. Crosswalk improvements have been completed in front on the Barter Theatre with the aim of improving pedestrian safety, while improvements to other areas continue to be planned, including sidewalk projects on both East and West Main Street and additions to the town's Urban Pathway, among others listed in this comprehensive plan.

Abingdon is also home to major and minor trails that serve as transportation, recreation, and tourism amenities. Among these, the Virginia Creeper Trail is a wonderful amenity that is used by both residents and visitors. The trail begins in Abingdon and stretches for 35 miles. The existing Creeper Trail is ideally located for a greenway on an off-road, dedicated right-of-way and can serve as a model for any new greenway expansions and corridors. The Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail, located west of the downtown also offers educational

information regarding the march of the Overmountain Men and their victory at the Battle of Kings Mountain, a turning point of the Revolutionary War. Abingdon's Urban Pathway is another important trail, providing a link west to east across the town from the Abingdon Muster Grounds along a series of paths and sidewalks that will eventually reach the Harry L. Coomes Recreation Center.

OTHER TRANSPORTATION

Mountain Lynx Transit serves as Abingdon's public bus system. It is operated by the District Three Governmental Cooperative which covers the Counties of Bland, Carroll, Grayson, Smyth, Washington, and Wythe. The local transit system includes modern handicapped accessible vans and two refurbished trolley cars. The main users of the transit system are senior citizens, students, and tourist groups.

Although Abingdon initially had passenger rail service there is no longer active passenger rail service in town, nor do passenger trains pass through or near the town. However, there is a railroad depot and several rail spurs that serve industrial properties, and Norfolk Southern freight trains continue to pass through the center of Abingdon.

The Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation conducted a feasibility study in 1997 for providing passenger rail service between Bristol, Richmond, and Washington D.C.. This study included a proposed rail station in Abingdon. Despite the fact that no major initiatives have been undertaken to implement this regional passenger rail service, Town of Abingdon remains supportive of potential future passenger rail service in the town.

The Virginia Highlands Airport is a general aviation airport located approximately one mile west of Abingdon on U.S. Route 11. The Airport is governed by an Airport Authority consisting of members appointed by the Washington County Board of Supervisors to represent each of the county's seven magisterial districts. Airport facilities include corporate, commercial, and private hangers and tie-downs and also supports facilities for the U.S. Forest Service and Virginia State Police. Charter passenger service and flight instruction are available. The airport was expanded in 2005 to include a terminal addition, a new corporate hangar, improved commercial hangar, and an improved corridor approach. The airport's Layout Plan serves as a long-range planning document for the airport. The document has been approved by the Federal Aviation Administration and calls for extending the airport's runway to better accommodate small business jets. Commercial air passenger service is not available at Virginia Highlands Airport, but is available at Tri-Cities Regional Airport near Blountville, Tennessee, about 25 miles southwest of Abingdon.

CHAPTER 3 - TRANSPORTATION

TRANSPORTATION POLICY AREAS

In planning for improvements, upgrades, and extensions of Town streets, individual transportation corridors should be treated as unique elements of the Town's fabric with the ability to shape the experience of residents and visitors just as much as zones or policies governing land use. A map of Transportation Policy Areas is included in this plan and should give general guidance to decisions involving street and trail improvements in the Town. The six street policy areas and two trail policy areas include recommendations for:

- Lanes – major corridors will necessarily include more lanes to handle high traffic volumes, but lanes must match the traffic, use, and character of the roadway.

- Speed – while entrance corridors and peripheral roadways may allow faster travel, the predominant speed for town streets should be 25 miles per hour to preserve the historic character and safe pedestrian environment of Abingdon.

- Bicycle and Pedestrian Accommodations – sidewalks and bicycle lanes are important street features in some areas but may not be necessary or appropriate in outlying areas.

- Landscape – street trees and trail buffers provide shade to pedestrians and visual appeal for all. Street trees should ideally be planted along most streets, while a landscape strip between the sidewalk and road edge, planted with grass and trees, provides additional comfort and safety for pedestrians along the busiest streets.

- Frontage – along some Abingdon streets an urban frontage is desirable, with buildings set right at, or very close to, the edge of the street right-of-way, while in peripheral areas and some neighborhoods a suburban frontage with buildings set well back from the street is more desirable.

Historic Street
Historic Streets make up the foundation on Abingdon's prized historic core. These streets are the backbone of the vital downtown business district and welcome pedestrians as readily as they welcome automobile traffic. Sidewalks on Historic Streets should be wide; in many cases filling the entire space between the street and buildings. Crosswalks should be frequent and well-marked, while trees should be planted in tree grates or in planters to provide shade and to enhance the beauty of the area.

Transition Street
Transition streets mix the features of historic streets, where slow speed traffic shares space with pedestrians, with the features of corridors, where moving cars from place to place is paramount. These streets will work to slow traffic to town-appropriate speeds while contributing to the quality and character of Abingdon streetscapes.

Entrance Corridor
Entrance Corridors connect each of Abingdon's three Interstate exits to the Town's major interior streets. For many, these streets are a first impression of Abingdon. Abingdon's entrance corridors should be improved to provide a fitting welcome to the town, with four total lanes, a landscaped median, and generous landscaped edges. Street tress should provide shade to pedestrians and enhance the beauty of these corridors. Entrance corridors serve automobile traffic primarily but also include sidewalks used to access important commercial areas. New developments and redevelopment along Entrance Corridors should feature buildings set close to the street edge with appropriately landscaped parking lots located beside or behind buildings.

Minor Corridor
Minor Corridors serve major automobile routes away from the historic core. Those streets require efficient movement of automobiles and see lower levels of pedestrian traffic. Vehicles on these corridors may move at slightly higher speeds so sidewalks and separated from the street by landscape strips for the comfort and safety of pedestrians. Streets trees enhance the look of minor corridors, and buildings may be set farther back from the street than in Abingdon's core areas.

Core Residential
Core Residential Streets serve neighborhoods close to Abingdon's historic downtown core. These streets form an essential part of the history and character of some of the town's best residential areas. Core Residential Streets are narrow two-lane streets with street trees and home set at or near the street edge. Vehicle traffic and pedestrian traffic are both accommodated in these neighborhoods, with sidewalks provided and street tress offering shade for pedestrians.

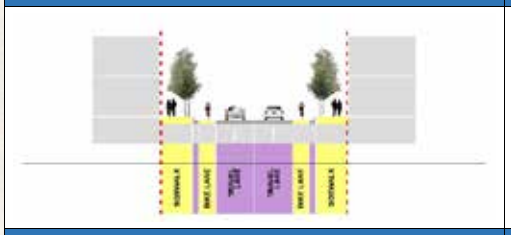
Neighborhood Residential
Neighborhood Residential streets are found away from the historic core, serving suburban residential areas where safe, attractive streets are desired, but where pedestrian activity is very low. Sidewalks may not be needed on neighborhood residential streets, but slow speeds still make neighborhood strolls possible. Areas with Neighborhood Residential streets will include suburban-style single family homes set well back from the street on larger lots.

Major Trail
Major Trails are bicycle and pedestrian paths that not only connect Abingdon Neighborhoods, but attract visitors to the town. Major Trails include the Virginia Creeper Trail, Overmountain Victory Trail, and Abingdon's Urban Pathway. Major Trails should be wide multi-use paths away from major roadways and heavily buffered from buildings, parking lots, and other built features, giving the experience of walking or bicycling in a park. Major Trails make the most important pedestrian connections within Abingdon and connect Abingdon to other places within the region.

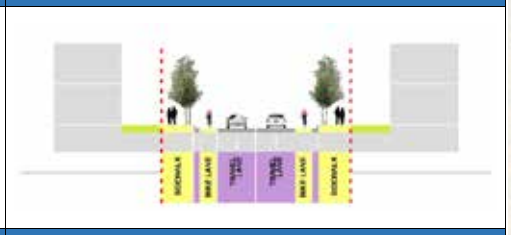
Connecting Trail
Connecting Trails are smaller bicycle and pedestrian trails making connections to important neighborhoods, schools, parks, and other features in Abingdon, as well as connecting to Major Trails. Connecting Trails are buffered by trees and other green space, but not to the same extent as Major Trails, and may simply be a sidewalk in some places.

Transportation Profile	Lanes	Speed	Bike-Ped	Landscape	Frontage
Historic Street	2	25	Sidewalk/Bike Lane	Street Trees	Urban
Transition Street	2	25	Sidewalk/Bike Lane	Street Trees	Suburban
Entrance Corridor	4	35	Sidewalk	Landscape Strip + Street Trees	Urban
Minor Corridor	2	35	Sidewalk	Landscape Strip + Street Trees	Suburban
Core Residential	2	25	Sidewalk	Street Trees	Urban
Neighborhood Residential	2	25	None	None	Suburban
Major Trail	n/a	n/a	10-foot Path	100-foot Buffer	None
Connecting Trail	n/a	n/a	6-foot Path	20-foot Buffer	None

Historic Street



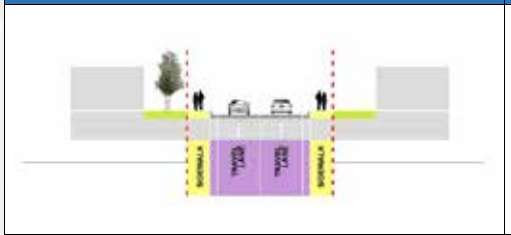
Transition Street



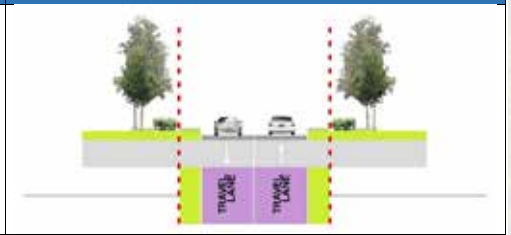
Entrance Corridor

Minor Corridor

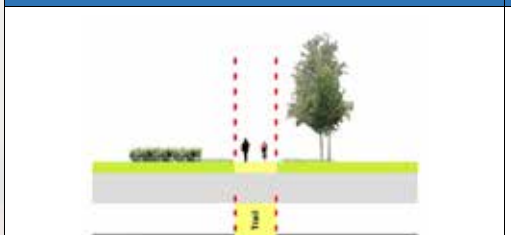
Core Residential



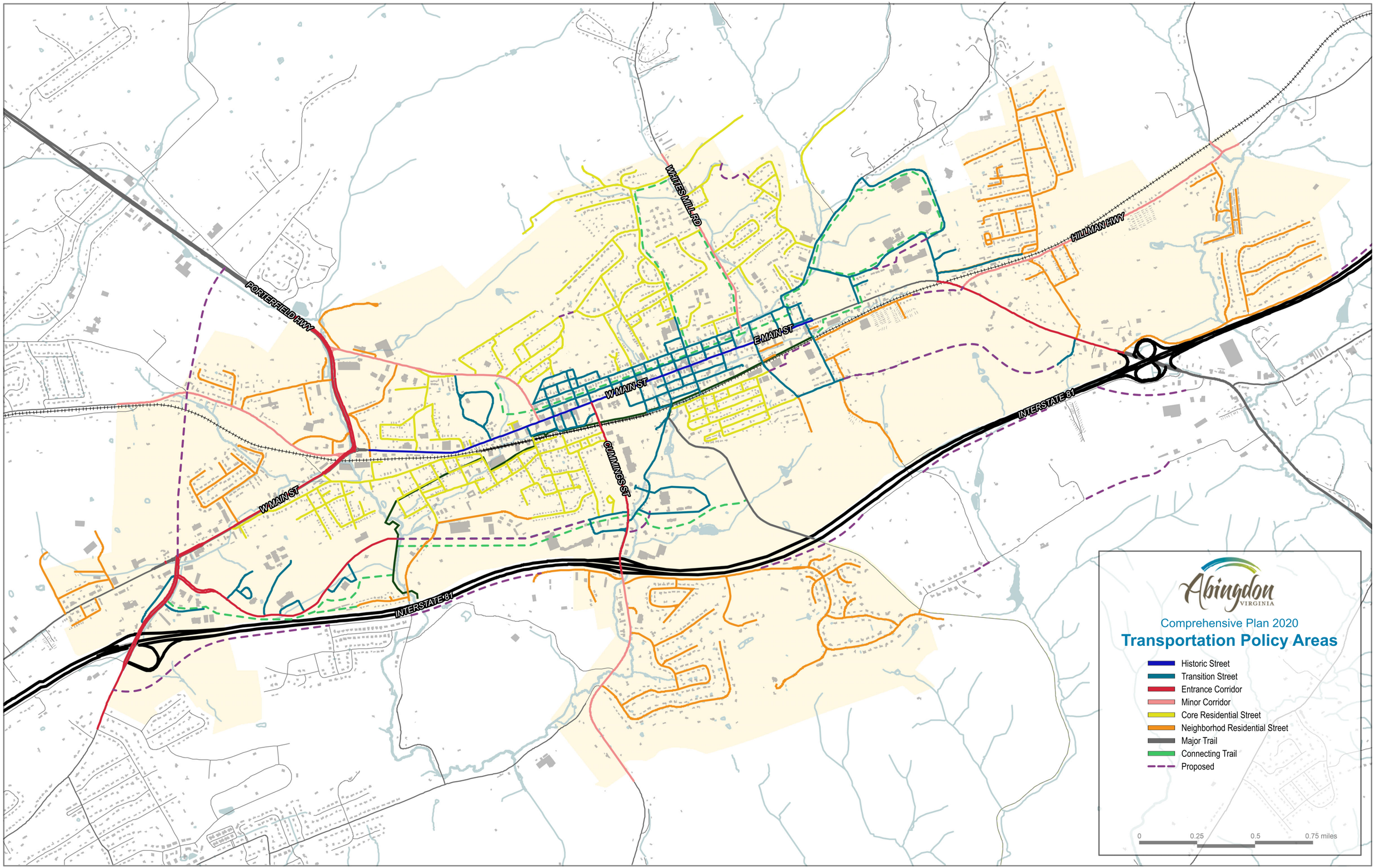
Neighborhood Residential



Major Trail



Connecting Trail


Abingdon
VIRGINIA
Comprehensive Plan 2020
Transportation Policy Areas
Historic Street
Transition Street
Entrance Corridor
Minor Corridor
Core Residential Street
Neighborhod Residential Street
Major Trail
Connecting Trail
Proposed
0
0.25
0.5
0.75 miles
PORTERFIELD HWY
W MAIN ST
E MAIN ST
WHITES MILL RD
CUMMINGS ST
HILLMAN HWY
INTERSTATE 81

TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS

As Abingdon grows, the Town's system of streets and roads will continue to change to meet the needs of residents, visitors, and others. The Town has identified street and pedestrian transportation projects to support the travel needs of existing residents and visitors, and to increase capacity, safety, and convenience as the Town grows. The transportation projects list included here identifies a wide range of projects from simple and inexpensive improvements to new major roadways that will require lengthy coordination and significant investment. No effort has been made to prioritize this list of projects, each being important to the overall success of the Abingdon transportation network in its own way.

STREET AND ROAD PROJECTS

Project	Cost Estimate
French Moore Jr. Boulevard	$16,000,000.00
Extend French Moore Jr. Boulevard from the Stone Mill Business & Technology Park east to Stone Mill Road, improving access to a major area of education, tourism, and business development.	
Cook Street Extension	$18,000,000.00
Extend Cook Street from its existing terminus at Cummings Street west to Stone Mill Road. Joining an extended French Moore Jr. Boulevard, these two projects together will allow access to the Stone Mill Business & Technology Park from Cummings Street and Exit 17.	
East Main Street Culvert	$3,000,000.00
Reconstruct a segment of East Main Street between Tanner and Deadmore Streets, replacing the existing culvert carrying Town Creek beneath the roadway. This improvement will increase the capacity of the culvert, preventing recurrent flooding of the street in heavy rains.	
Green Spring Road Connector	$450,000.00
Reorganize the connection between Green Spring Road and Cummings Street to provide better access in the vicinity of new commercial development east of Cummings Street.	
Interstate 81 Frontage Road	$15,000,000.00
Complete connections and new road segments to provide a parallel frontage road along the south side of Interstate 81 between exits 14 and 19, improving local connectivity and reducing local trips on Interstate 81.	
West Main Street Access Management	$2,500,000.00
Implement an access management program as needed along the entirety of West Main Street, combining and organizing property entrances, increase safe vehicle and pedestrian access.	
East Main Street Access Management	$1,750,000.00
Implement an access management program as needed along the entirety of East Main Street, combining and organizing property entrances, increase safe vehicle and pedestrian access.	

Project	Cost Estimate
Cummings Street Access Management	$2,500,000.00
Implement an access management program as needed along the important Cummings Street entrance corridor, combining and organizing property entrances, increase safe vehicle and pedestrian access.	
Stone Mill Road Widening	$2,000,000.00
Widen Stone Mill Drive from Colonial Road south to the Town's corporate limits, improving safety and capacity along a segment with increased traffic due to recent residential development and planned future access between Cummings Street and the Stone Mill Business & Technology Park.	
Interstate Exit 17	$40,000,000.00
Replace the bridge carrying Interstate 81 over State Route 75, allowing for a widened State Route 75 section design and eliminating a point of traffic congestion for local and through traffic.	
Stanley Street Extension	$2,500,000.00
Extend Stanley Street west to Thompson Drive and Boone Street, in the vicinity of Abingdon High School, while adding a roundabout at the existing intersection of Stanley Street and Thompson Drive, organizing vehicle access and improving traffic safety in the area of local public schools.	
Green Spring Rd	$3,500,000.00
Improve Green Spring Road from its origin and Cummings Street to Pecan Street in downtown Abingdon, improving safety and local access.	
Jonesboro Road Bypass	$65,000,000.00
Extend Jonesboro Road from its existing terminus at West Main Street north to U.S. 58 at a point in Washington County northwest of Abingdon, creating a bypass for regional traffic and reducing truck and other through traffic on Main Street in Abingdon's historic core.	

PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE PROJECTS

Project	Cost Estimate
Pedestrian Connectivity Program	$120,000
Construct necessary pedestrian connectivity projects town-wide, including sidewalk segments, crosswalks, and other improvements to complete the town's pedestrian network.	
Bicycle Connectivity Program	$100,000
Construct necessary bicycle connectivity projects town-wide, including bicycle lanes and other improvements to complete the town's bicycle network and improve bicycle connectivity.	
East Main Street Sidewalk Improvements	$500,000.00
Construct sidewalk extensions and complete gaps in the existing sidewalk network to provide full pedestrian access to adjacent residential and commercial uses, and to provide a safe pedestrian connection from the downtown core to development near Exit 19.	
West Main Street Sidewalk Improvements	$350,000.00
Complete the pedestrian network in the vicinity of West Main Street, providing safe pedestrian connections between existing and future residential and commercial land uses.	
Wayfinding Signage	$100,000.00
Plan and construct a coordinated system of wayfinding signage to direct Abingdon visitors to major routes, neighborhoods, and local attractions.	
Urban Pathway Extension	$250,000.00
Continue to expand the Urban Pathway within new or existing rights of way to provide pedestrian connectivity east to west across the town, eventually connecting the Abingdon Muster Grounds with the Harry L. Coomes Recreation Center.	

SIX-YEAR IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The Virginia Department of Transportation plans six years in advance for future transportation projects and their funding. Public funds are allocated by the Commonwealth Transportation Board to transportation projects over six-fiscal years, comprising the Six-Year Improvement Program. Projects include improvements to the interstate, primary, secondary, and urban road systems, public transit, ports and airports and other programs. The table below identifies currently listed Six-Year Improvement Program initiative within Abingdon at the time of this writing in 2020.

Proj. Num.	Description	Fiscal Year	Project Cost
113768	RTE.11 SIDEWALK EAST SIDE OF EAST MAIN ST. ABINGDON	FY 21-25	$52,000
115481	#SMART20-HILLMAN HWY & OLD ELEVEN DRIVE INT IMP (APP ID#4029	FY 21-25	$668,000
115484	#SMART20-RUSSELL RD & POPLAR ST INT IMP (APP ID# 4031)	FY 21-25	$765,000

OPPORTUNITIES AND ISSUES

STREET EXTENSIONS

Abingdon will continue to look for opportunities to add to the town's street grid to improve access for residents and visitors. The street projects included in this plan involve upgrades to existing streets as well as new streets that can provide new paths east and west across Abingdon to reduce local traffic on the interstate highway system and to better organize truck traffic. While many of the large construction projects included here are long-term efforts, the town can continue to advance these connections and utilize grant and other funding efforts where available to improve the local street network.

TRUCK TRAFFIC

With its proximity to Interstate 81, truck traffic near Abingdon is a major issue. In particular, some trucks pass through the town's downtown, via Cummings Street, to reach U.S. 19 north and west of Abingdon. Narrow downtown streets are not well suited for large trucks, and the noise

of these trucks is not compatible with the enjoyment of downtown visitors and diners. The town would prefer that trucks use the Jonesboro Road exist rather than Cummings street, and an extension of Jonesboro to Route 19 is a long-term goal. However, the town is also legally prevented from limiting truck traffic on Cummings Street as this route is a part of the official state highway network.

PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE CONNECTIVITY

The town will continue to advance pedestrian and bicycle transportation projects along with these that benefit cars and trucks. These projects can include complete studies of pedestrian and Bicycle needs on East and West Main Street, continued work on Abingdon's Urban Pathway, and other efforts that make walking and biking in Abingdon safe and convenient.

ROAD BEAUTIFICATION

In addition to the movement of people and goods, Abingdon's street network contributes to the character and beauty of the town. Constrained street widths, the presence of sidewalks, and street trees all help to create comfortable and safe spaces for all street users and contribute to the quality of downtown Abingdon streets.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

There may be opportunities for expansion of the local transit system in the future, especially given the desire to increase tourism efforts. A local trolley system, small guided bus tours, or other group transportation activities may be beneficial. In addition, the service needs of residents may need further evaluation, especially since there are substantial governmental and medical services in Abingdon. A complete survey of transportation needs may be helpful to determine where there are deficiencies in public transportation.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

1. It will be safe and easy for anyone to pedal, roll, stroll, or drive on Abingdon's streets through tamed traffic and expanded bicycle and pedestrian facilities.
1.1. Implement the streetscape recommendations found in this plan's Transportation Policy Areas, and other applicable plans. 1.2. Conduct a sidewalk inventory and pedestrian network completion plan to guide and prioritize investments in pedestrian improvements. 1.3. Continue to expand the town's Urban Pathway as a pedestrian spine connecting the many trails and neighborhoods of Abingdon. 1.4. Develop an attractive wayfinding system and signage plan that is in context with the historic context of the town and pursue implementation.
2. Abingdon's street network will provide more route options for people to travel within and through the Town, to alleviate traffic congestion on major streets by aligning street design, law enforcement, and education to reduce speeding and truck traffic in the Town's historic district and on Main Street.
2.1. Continue to pursue new in-Town street connections as outlined in this plan to increase access and reduce traffic pressure on major streets. 2.2. Conduct access management studies and improvements along Cummings Street and East and West Main Streets to organize entrances and traffic while increasing vehicular and pedestrian safety. 2.3. Promote transportation projects inside and outside of Abingdon that improve the regional transportation network, including the Northwest Bypass Connector, I-81 frontage roads, and design improvements along County roads that enter Abingdon such as Porterfield Highway, Jonesboro Road, Cummings Street, and East and West Main Streets.
3. Public transportation will be a viable option for traveling to work and enable people to access daily needs and fully participate in society regardless of income or abilities.
3.1. Work with tourism agencies to determine the public transportation needs of visitors and to pursue such facilities through partnership efforts and grant solicitation. 3.2. Continue to expand the Mountain Lynx Transit service to meet the needs of future Town growth. 3.3. Support long-term planning efforts to bring viable passenger rail service to Southwest Virginia, and to include Abingdon as a station stop.

Chapter 4

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

CHAPTER 4 - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Existing Assets
- Facts and Figures
    - Employment by Industry
    - Employment Projections
    - Occupation Projections
    - Unemployment Trends
    - Top County Employers
- Opportunities and Issues
    - Tourism
    - Regional Center
    - Stone Mill Business and Technology Park
    - Belmont Hotel Site
    - West Main Corridor Improvements
    - Telecommunications Network
- Goals
- Strategies

The future sustainability of Abingdon requires a stable and diversified economy that celebrates and reflects the special community heritage and fulfills the market needs of residents and visitors. The town is the recognized regional center for health care, law, and headquarters operations for professional businesses. In addition, the arts and culture of Abingdon has historically provided a stable foundation for economic development. Future economic prosperity should build on the regional emphasis and expand the arts/culture foundation to take advantage of the community's potential for new economic development initiatives to complement the existing heritage and take advantage of new niche markets.

EXISTING ASSETS

Abingdon's existing business and economic development efforts focus on promoting tourism and revitalizing the town's commercial corridors and historic downtown. Both public and private interests work as partners to enhance tourism opportunities and improve the historic Main Street and entrance corridors.

CHAPTER 4 - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Abingdon was named first place national winner of the "American Dream Town" competition in 2006. The designation was bestowed on the town by the American Dream Town, USA which is dedicated to inspiring Americans to celebrate their heritage, take pride in neighborhoods, and promote tourism. This designation is very prestigious and provides outstanding marketing opportunities for the town to attract visitors from all over the world. Additionally, Abingdon was voted one of America's Coolest Small Towns in 2016 and among USA Today's 10 Best Small Town Food Scenes in 2019.

In 1798, the County Court of Washington County directed that a market house be built on the courthouse lot. Tuesdays and Saturdays were the regular market days, as they are now. In 2005, the town, with financial assistance from Washington County and the Virginia Tobacco Indemnification Program, began planning a new market facility, to be located on Remsburg Drive. The new Farmers Market is a key structure in increasing the level of activity in the core downtown area. The market and Abingdon's locally owned restaurants offer an opportunity to attract visitors and create a new experience for Abingdon. The facility allows for more flexible market hours and, therefore, more access to farm fresh products, creating a more health conscious community.

Abingdon offers a number of small to medium-sized conference and meeting facilities. The newest, state-of-the-art facilities are located at the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center; they include a 13,000-square foot hall for tradeshows and an executive conference room that seats 100 persons. The Dickenson Conference Center, located at the Southwest Virginia 4-H Educational Center northeast of Abingdon, offers modern, spacious meeting rooms and flex-space facilities for up to 220 people. The Virginia Highlands Small Business Incubator, located in the Stone Mill Business and Technology Park, provides meeting space in a high-tech atmosphere. A variety of other meeting, banquet and entertainment facilities are found at the Martha Washington Inn, Coomes Recreation Center, and area motels.

Abingdon exhibits several distinct business districts: East and West Main Streets, Courthouse Hill and historic Downtown Abingdon. Additional business areas are located at the town's gateway entrance corridors at Porterfield Highway, and I-81 Exits 19, 17 and 14. The town prides itself on its unique, niche businesses and its orientation to arts and entertainment.

Courthouse Hill and Downtown Abingdon contain much of the town's impressive architecture and historic buildings. Courthouse Hill contains the historic Washington County Courthouse and most of the oldest structures and early office buildings. Government functions and offices in this area help to business activities and development patterns.

CHAPTER 4 - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

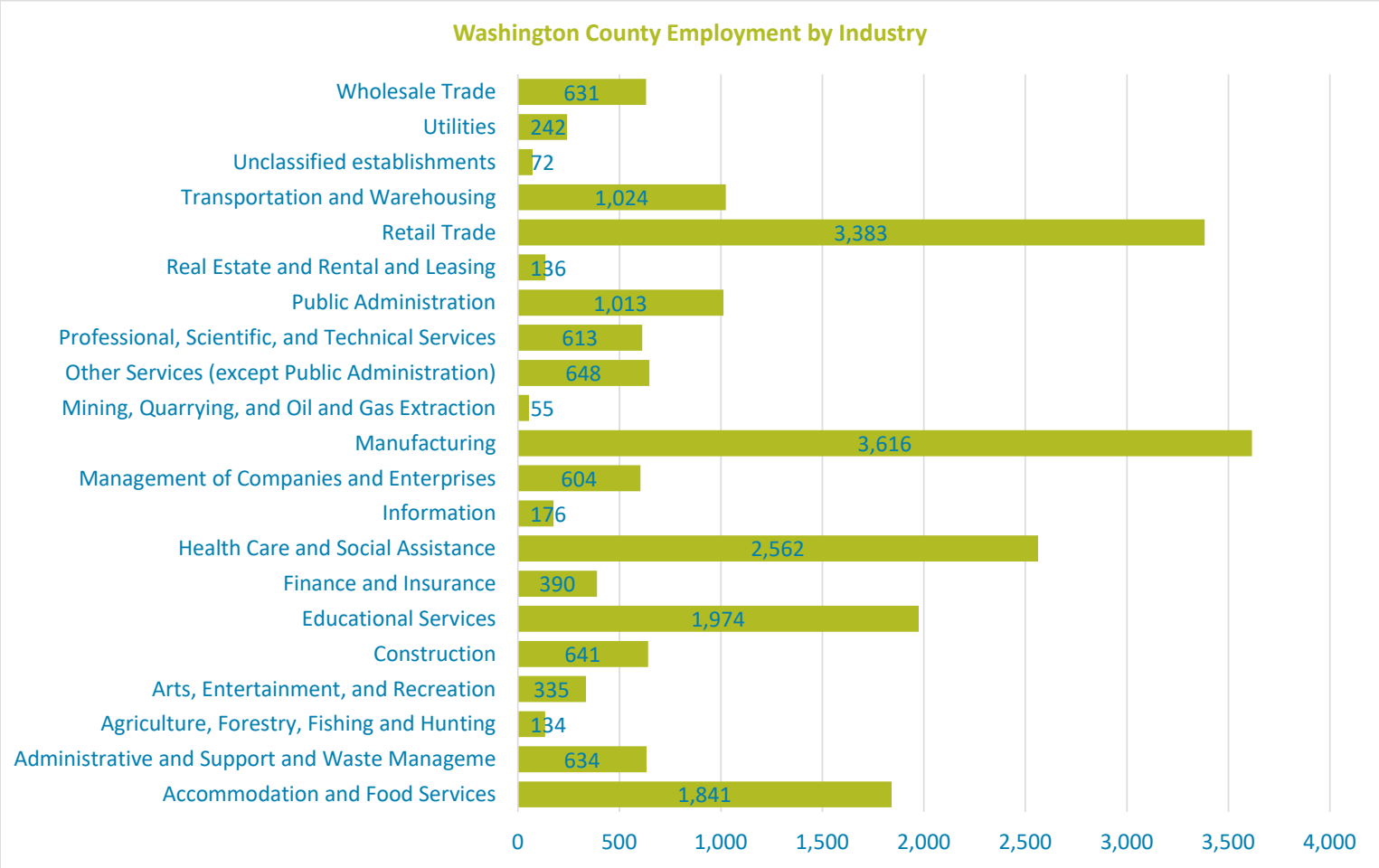
The central business district, or historic Downtown Abingdon, extends generally from Pecan Street (east) to Palmer Street (west). Downtown Abingdon was designated as an official Virginia Main Street community in 2007. This designation provides technical expertise and programs for businesses in the areas of economic restructuring, marketing/promotion, organization management, and architectural design assistance. A key element of successful revitalization to create a vibrant downtown will be expanded mixed-use development of both commercial and residential uses in buildings. Improving the land use mixture will enhance activities and hours of operation. A 2014 Downtown Abingdon Market Assessment found business gaps and opportunities in clothing, restaurants, and other specialty retail markets.

The commercial corridors leading into town offer a variety of business services for residents and visitors; however, the corridors also are challenges in terms of visual attractiveness, signage, and coordinated development. East and West Main Street reflect early development patterns of U.S. Route 11, which once served as the major transportation corridor for east-west traffic prior to the development of I-81. Exits 19, 17, and 14 reflect different business services and patterns of development, mostly those oriented to the interstate traveler. All of these entrance corridors need improvement to better coordinate access and enhance signage. These areas serve as a first impression for visitors; it is essential that they are welcoming, distinctive, and representative of the community's identity.

The Stone Mill Business and Technology Park is located west of downtown in close proximity to the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center near I-81, Exit 14. The park consists of approximately 75 acres and is established as a planned business and technology park with design covenants and common amenities, including a boulevard entrance and a trail system. The Virginia Highlands Small Business Incubator was constructed in Stone Mill in 2003.

Other industrial areas are located adjacent to the railroad, south of Main Street. These areas are scattered through town and may be opportunities for improvement and/or redevelopment to better serve the town with mixed-use development.

FACTS AND FIGURES



Source: Virginia Employment Commission (VEC), Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) (July, August, September) 2018

FACTS AND FIGURES

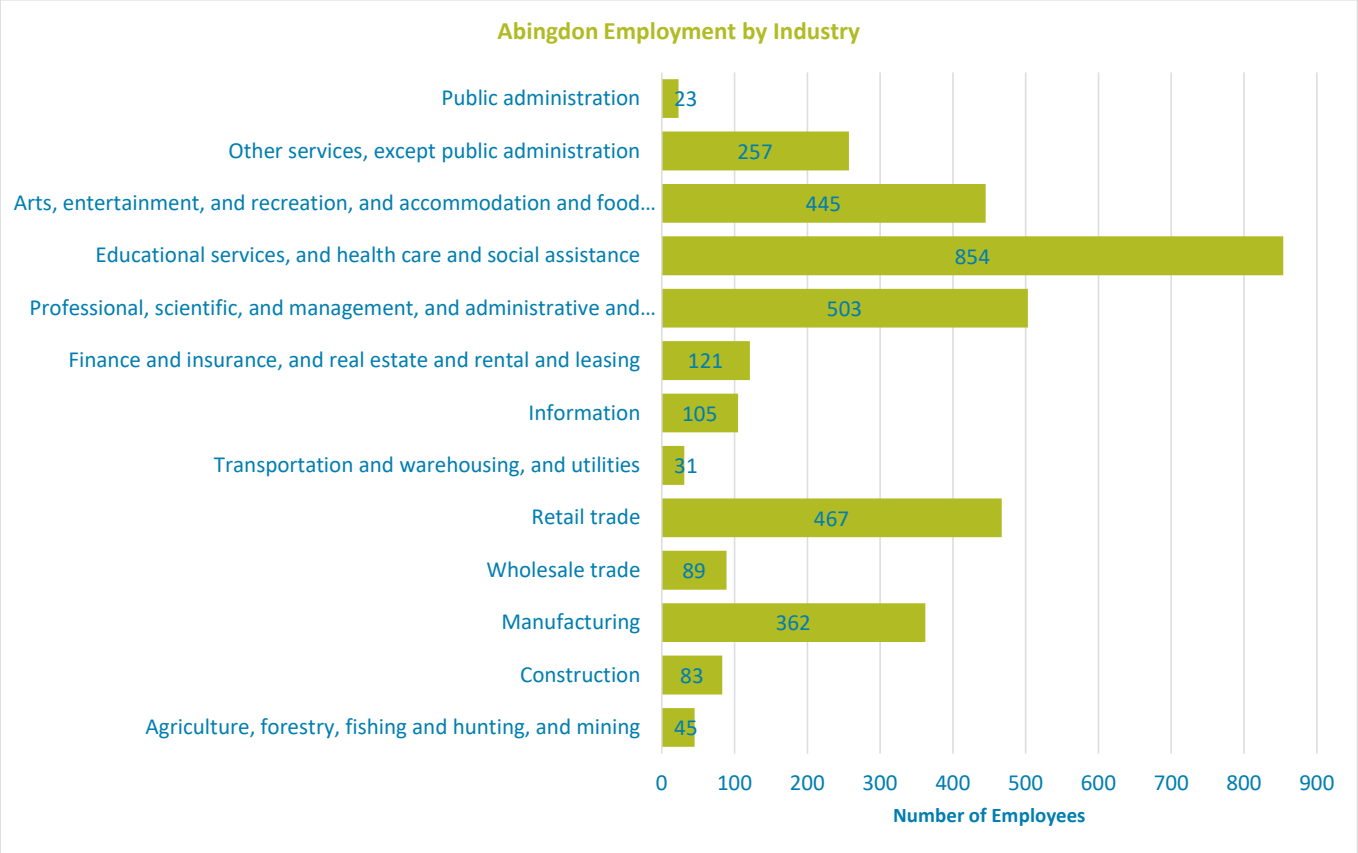
Industry	Employment			Percent	
	2016 Estimated Employment	2026 Projected Employment	Change	Total	Total Annual
Total, All Industries	146,832	158,439	11,607	7.91%	0.76%
Accommodation and Food Services	14,015	15,478	1,463	10.44%	1.00%
Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services	6,130	7,073	943	15.38%	1.44%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	369	480	111	30.08%	2.66%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	1,123	1,283	160	14.25%	1.34%
Construction	3,990	4,149	159	3.99%	0.39%
Educational Services	21,194	23,555	2,361	11.14%	1.06%
Finance and Insurance	2,356	2,485	129	5.48%	0.53%
Health Care and Social Assistance	16,222	20,335	4,113	25.35%	2.29%
Information	1,206	1,152	-54	-4.48%	-0.46%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	1,070	1,123	53	4.95%	0.48%
Manufacturing	25,797	24,401	-1,396	-5.41%	-0.55%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	308	308	0	0.00%	0.00%
Other Services (except Public Administration)	3,220	3,502	282	8.76%	0.84%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	4,413	5,138	725	16.43%	1.53%
Public Administration	3,328	3,319	-9	-0.27%	-0.03%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	1,575	1,670	95	6.03%	0.59%
Retail Trade	18,486	19,203	717	3.88%	0.38%
Transportation and Warehousing	3,131	3,535	404	12.90%	1.22%
Utilities	211	209	-2	-0.95%	-0.10%
Wholesale Trade	2,666	2,693	27	1.01%	0.10%

Source: VEC Industry Projections (Long Term) In New River/Mount Rogers (LWIA II) in 2016-2026

Occupation	Employment			Percent	
	2016 Estimated Employment	2026 Projected Employment	Change	Total	Total Annual
Total, All Industries	146,832	158,439	11,607	7.91%	0.76%
Architecture and Engineering	2,114	2,235	121	5.72%	0.56%
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media	1,556	1,741	185	11.89%	1.13%
Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance	4,666	5,134	468	10.03%	0.96%
Business and Financial Operations	4,784	5,323	539	11.27%	1.07%
Community and Social Services	2,663	3,220	557	20.92%	1.92%
Computer and Mathematical	2,227	2,553	326	14.64%	1.38%
Construction and Extraction	4,955	5,162	207	4.18%	0.41%
Education, Training, and Library	12,840	14,571	1,731	13.48%	1.27%
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	507	578	71	14.00%	1.32%
Food Preparation and Serving Related	13,516	15,064	1,548	11.45%	1.09%
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	7,898	9,144	1,246	15.78%	1.48%
Healthcare Support	3,497	4,228	731	20.90%	1.92%
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	6,132	6,504	372	6.07%	0.59%
Legal	741	794	53	7.15%	0.69%
Life, Physical, and Social Science	1,419	1,569	150	10.57%	1.01%
Management	4,870	5,346	476	9.77%	0.94%
Office and Administrative Support	20,101	21,058	957	4.76%	0.47%
Personal Care and Service	5,196	7,062	1,866	35.91%	3.12%
Production	18,261	16,952	-1,309	-7.17%	-0.74%
Protective Service	3,823	3,986	163	4.26%	0.42%
Sales and Related	15,773	16,360	587	3.72%	0.37%
Transportation and Material Moving	9,293	9,855	562	6.05%	0.59%

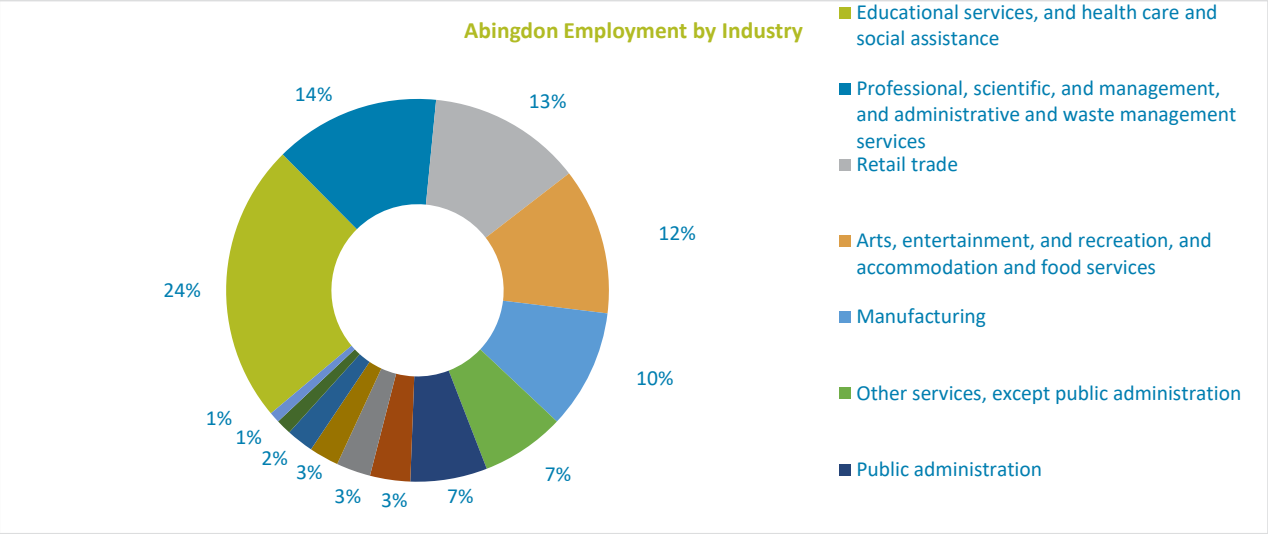
Source: VEC Occupational Projections (Long Term) in New River/Mount Rogers (LWIAII) in 2016-2026

FACTS AND FIGURES

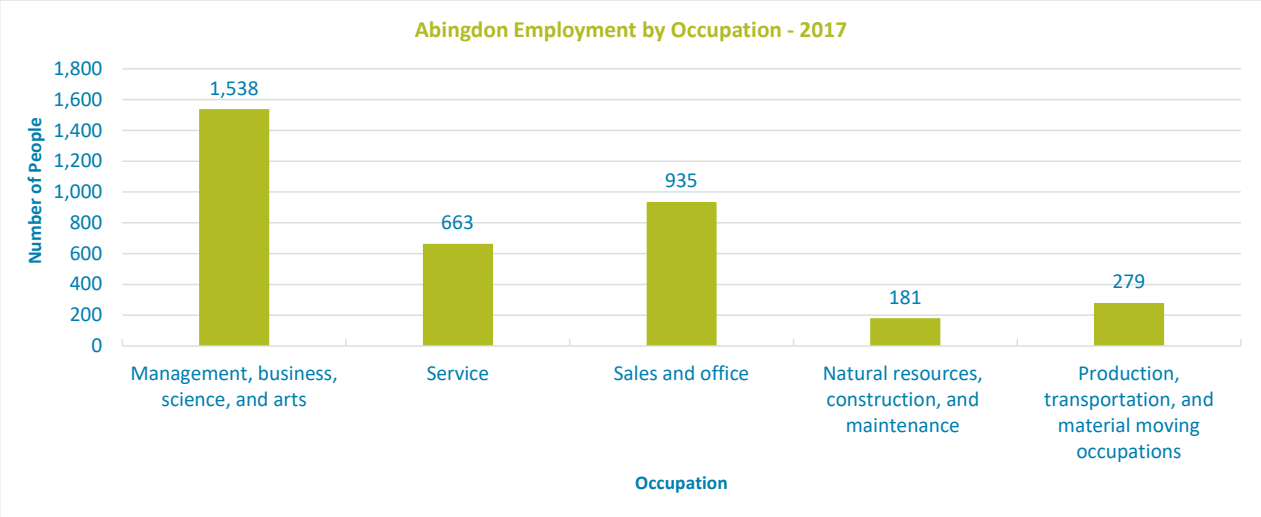


Source: 2013-2017 ACS 5-Year Estimates

FACTS AND FIGURES



Source: 2013-2017 ACS 5-Year Estimates (Same data as above graph expressed as percentages.)



Source: 2013-2017 ACS 5-Year Estimates

UNEMPLOYMENT TRENDS

Unemployment Trend		
Year	Washington County	Virginia
2009	8.5%	6.7%
2010	7.9%	7.1%
2011	7.1%	6.6%
2012	6.7%	6.1%
2013	6.4%	5.7%
2014	5.8%	5.2%
2015	4.8%	4.5%
2016	4.6%	4.1%
2017	4.1%	3.7%
2018	3.4%	3.0%
2019	3.3%	2.8%

Source: Virginia Employment Commission

LARGEST LOCAL EMPLOYERS

Top 20 Abingdon / Washington County Employers
1. Food City
2. Washington County Schools
3. Ballad Health
4. Utility Trailer Manufacturing
5. Wal Mart
6. Paramont Manufacturing
7. Camac Corporation
8. Washington County
9. Emory and Henry College
10. Cabela's
11. Virginia Highlands Community College
12. Kearney National, Inc.
13. Town of Abingdon
14. Columbus McKinnon Corporation
15. Southwest Virginia Regional Jail Authority
16. People, Inc.
17. Lux Enterprises Inc.
18. Lowes Home Improvement Centers, Inc.
19. McDonald's
20. Barter Foundation, Inc.

CHAPTER 4 - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

OPPORTUNITIES AND ISSUES

TOURISM

Visitation and tourism have been, and continue to be, hallmarks of the Abingdon economy. Visitors come to Abingdon for a variety of reasons and activities, including the quaint and historic downtown, major festivals and events, the Barter Theatre, the Martha Washington Inn and Spa, and as a starting point to explore the Virginia Creeper Trail, among others. Tourism benefits the local economy as visitors support local businesses and contribute to the local tax base through lodging and other taxes. Visitors also require comparatively little as they do not require schools for their children or take advantage of many other local government services or programs. While tourism will remain a large part of the Town's future, Abingdon must also work to diversify the local economy to include a broader spectrum of quality employment and enterprises that attract and retain residents.

REGIONAL CENTER

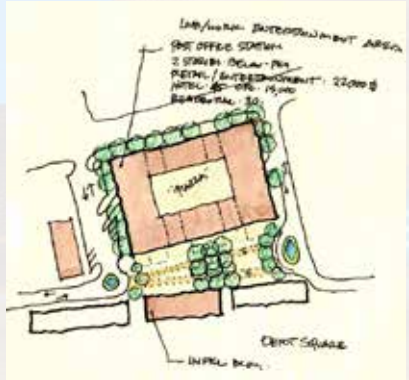
A 2014 Downtown Abingdon Market Assessment found that 61% of Abingdon business customers came from within Washington County. Abingdon is, and will strive to continue to be, a center for government services, healthcare, professional services, and retail spending in the region. The town must continue to market itself, using its prime location and high quality of life, to attract and retain major businesses that desire a presence in southwest Virginia. Abingdon will continue to look beyond its own border.

STONE MILL BUSINESS AND TECHNOLOGY PARK

The Stone Mill Business and Technology Park is located west of downtown and adjacent to the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center, Virginia Highlands Community College, and the Southwest Virginia Cultural Center and Marketplace. The Park is near I-81, Exit 14 and consists of approximately 75 acres established as a planned business and technology park with design covenants and common amenities, including a boulevard entrance and a trail system. The Park is now home to the Washington County Government Center and Virginia Highlands Small Business Incubator and features up to eight available sites for other major businesses. The Park is Abingdon's primary site for potential large-business location, adding to the town's economy, tax base, and employment.

BELMONT HOTEL SITE

Many Abingdon residents have fond memories of the historic Belmont Hotel in downtown and the businesses and services available there. Presently, the area contains a large surface parking lot and Abingdon's post office. To complement nearby Depot Square and Main Street in the future, a new building on Main Street may be developed at this site. In-fill development in this area can provide optimal use of valuable land in downtown and add commercial space for retail, entertainment, a hotel, residential, downtown branch post office, and a parking garage. Pedestrian space and additional infill development between the depot buildings on the south edge of this site can also provide space for expanded outdoor activities and festivals. While retaining a branch post office in downtown Abingdon will create an important civic anchor, distribution facilities could be moved to another location.



WEST MAIN CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS

To improve the experience of visiting downtown Abingdon, and to incrementally expand the downtown district, West Main Street offers opportunities for revitalization through corridor improvements and new in-fill development. Improvements that include landscaping, coordinated entrances and parking areas, building façade improvements, new infill development and coordinated signage can elevate the look and feel of the corridor while also opening up this area as a zone of economic improvement in its own right.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS NETWORK

Today, Abingdon is well-served with cellular telephone and high-speed internet networks that cover businesses and residences throughout the community. The Town's electronic engagement is due, in part, to early adoption of internet technology. In 1996, the Town of Abingdon established a fiber optic network, known as the Electronic Village of Abingdon, with major fiber optic lines connecting major town employers and institutions including police and fire stations, KVAT/Food City Headquarters, and the Abingdon Convention and Visitor's Bureau. Today, the Town is now served by two major broadband companies, Point Broadband and Comcast, allowing consumer choice in internet service.

Abingdon is fortunate to possess a high level of broadband connectivity. Quality, high-speed data service is increasingly seen as an essential utility rather than a luxury. Quality internet connectivity can be used as a factor in selling new and expanding businesses on locations on Abingdon, including high technology industries that support the Town's desire for well-paying jobs and economic diversification. Quality broadband service can also be a factor in the location decisions of residents, with the availability of service allowing work from home and home-based business opportunities that can draw residents of larger metropolitan areas to smaller towns like Abingdon and reduce the need for Abingdon residents to commute for work.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

1. Abingdon will grow its economy by helping a wide range of local and regional entrepreneurs and businesses prosper
1.1. Actively promote Abingdon as the regional center for health care, professional services, and government services, working with county, regional, state, and federal agencies to retain and expand employers and service providers. 1.2. Market and leverage the Town's high-quality broadband access, interstate highway access, and other assets as a part of economic development and business recruitment activities. 1.3. Continue to promote and support tourism-related businesses, while creating targets for the recruitment of technology and other businesses and industries that provide higher wage jobs. 1.4. Utilize the Infill and Mixed-use Development Feasibility Survey (ASRL-ETSU Report) and the subsequent Hill Studio and Arnett Muldrow Reports to apply for Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development Community Block Grants.
2. The Town will attract businesses looking to grow in Southwest Virginia in appropriate locations as planned and designated in the Comprehensive Plan.
2.1. Continue to market business location opportunities in the Stone Mill Business and Technology Park and completed planned transportation projects that improve vehicle and pedestrian access to the Park. 2.2. Continue to embrace the business potential of the Town's interstate interchanges, while establishing clear boundaries and design guidelines for these areas. 2.3. Work with Washington County and the Virginia Highlands Airport Authority to market the airport as a quality general aviation facility for business.
3. Abingdon will continue improving its downtown and quality of life in order to make the Town a top destination for talented people and firms.
3.1. Continue to support, and coordinate regularly with, the Abingdon Main Street organization and its efforts to attract and retain businesses and events that elevate the vitality of the downtown. 3.2. Initiate projects to improve pedestrian amenities, slow traffic, and increase landscaping along West Main Street west of Russell Road to incorporate this area into the pedestrian and activity zone of downtown Abingdon. 3.3. Identify and promote key infill and redevelopment sites in the downtown, including the Belmont Hotel site, with emphasis on projects that add residents and business vitality to this area. 3.4. Work with appropriate organizations to steadily increase farmers market days, market events, and variety market vendors.

Chapter 5

PARKS, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACE

CHAPTER 5 - PARKS, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACE

PARKS, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACE

- Facts and Figures
  - Abingdon Parks and Facilities
  - New Sports Park
  - Regional Parks and Recreation
- Opportunities and Issues
  - Creeper Trail
- Goals
- Strategies

Abingdon's parks, natural areas, and recreational facilities are a powerful asset to the town, helping to attract visitation and tourism while also contributing to a high quality of life that attracts and retains residents and businesses. The town's facilities range from small neighborhood parks and trails to a major indoor recreation center and trails that attract visitors from around the state and country. Abingdon has made a strong commitment to achieving a high level of parks and recreation access for its residents, including funding parks and recreation at a higher level than most towns of its size.

FACTS AND FIGURES

ABINGDON PARKS AND FACILITIES

The Town of Abingdon maintains small neighborhood parks including Munchkin Park, Highlands Street Park, Main Street Park, Park Street Park, and Church Street Park, as well as larger community parks including Latture Field, Veterans Memorial Park, and Foster-DeBose Field. These town parks include a variety of features and amenities as summarized in the included table. In addition to these parks, Abingdon's Coomes Recreation Center is the town's only indoor recreation facility

Most park and recreation facilities in the Abingdon area are owned and maintained by the town, while the Virginia Creeper Trail is jointly owned and maintained by the Town of Abingdon, the Town of Damascus, and the US Forest Service.

Park/Facility	Type	Park Acreage	Playground	Picnic	Restrooms	Trails	Baseball/Softball	Basketball	Tennis	Pickleball	Soccer	Football	Rugby	Volleyball	Skating	Swimming	Other
Harry L. Coomes Recreation Center	Community Center	19	*	*	*	*		*	*	*	*			*	*	*	Shelters, Outdoor Exercise Stations
Alvarado Park	Community Park	2		*	*	*											Shelters
Dog Park on Walden Road	Community Park	1															Water Fountain, Training Amenities
Latture Field	Community Park	4.70		*	*		*				*	*	*				Concession Stand, Special Community Events
Little League Fields (Ray Petty & Foster-DeBose)	Community Park	4.78	*	*	*		*										Batting Cages, Concession Stand
Lois Humphreys Park on Main Street	Community Park	0.43	*	*													Gazebo
Veterans Memorial Park	Community Park	12.72	*	*	*	*											War Monuments, Bronze Ribbon, Memorial Sculpture, Missing Man Chair, Ceremonial Flags, Shelters
Eberhardt Park	Neighborhood Park	1.05	*	*	*	*		*									Shelter
Kings Mountain School Park on Highlands Street	Neighborhood Park	0.39	*	*		*											Shelter
Labyrinth Park on Valley Street	Neighborhood Park	0.25		*													
Landon Boyd Park on A Street	Neighborhood Park	2.00	*	*													Shelter, Stage
Munchkin Park	Neighborhood Park	4.15	*	*	*	*											Shelter, Water Fountain
Muster Grounds	Neighborhood Park	8.85		*	*	*											Shelters, Walking Trail
N. Church Street Tennis Courts	Neighborhood Park			*		*			*	*							Water Fountain

CHAPTER 5 - PARKS, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACE

NEW SPORTS COMPLEX

The Town of Abingdon is pursuing a major new sports complex at the time of this writing. Adjacent to the recently constructed Meadows commercial development near exit 17 and the Virginia Creeper Trail, the planned facility is to include multiple lighted baseball, softball, soccer, and football fields, as well as concessions buildings and other amenities. The park is envisioned to attract major regional sports tournaments, helping to contribute to local lodging and restaurant businesses. The Town has worked extensively with a design firm on plans for this facility and construction is planned to begin in 2021.

REGIONAL PARKS AND RECREATION

As the hub of a larger region, Abingdon parks and facilities are used not only by town residents, but by residents of Washington County and other nearby areas.

Additional parks, facilities, and attractions are also available outside of the town and enjoyed by Abingdon residents. The Virginia Outdoors Plan, developed the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, documents a wide range of recreational opportunities available outside of the town in the greater Mount Rogers Planning District (incorporating the Counties of Bland, Carroll, Grayson, Smyth, Washington and Wythe, and the Cities of Bristol and Galax). Residents have access to regional recreation areas including South Holston Lake, the Mount Rogers National Recreation Area, Hidden Valley Wildlife Management Area, and Clinch Mountain Wildlife Recreation Area, among others. In particular, South Holston Lake, a reservoir owned by the Tennessee Valley Authority, provides opportunities for water access and recreation in the region. Recreational trails are prominent in the area and in addition to the Virginia Creeper Trail include the Appalachian Trail, Overmountain Victory Trail, and Iron Mountain Trail. Scenic highways and byways, as well as various thematic trails also play a role, including the Virginia Civil War Trail, Wilderness Road Trail, Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trails. The 2018 Virginia Outdoors Plan identifies natural areas, parks, water access, historic areas, trails, scenic drives, and playing fields and sports facilities as the most needed outdoor recreation opportunities in the Mount Rogers Planning District.

Washington County has identified the objective of enhancing and increasing recreational opportunities for citizens and visitors of the County while preserving open space. In particular, the county hopes to provide additional safe public access to recreational waters and participate in studies of trail opportunities in the county.

Opportunities and Issues

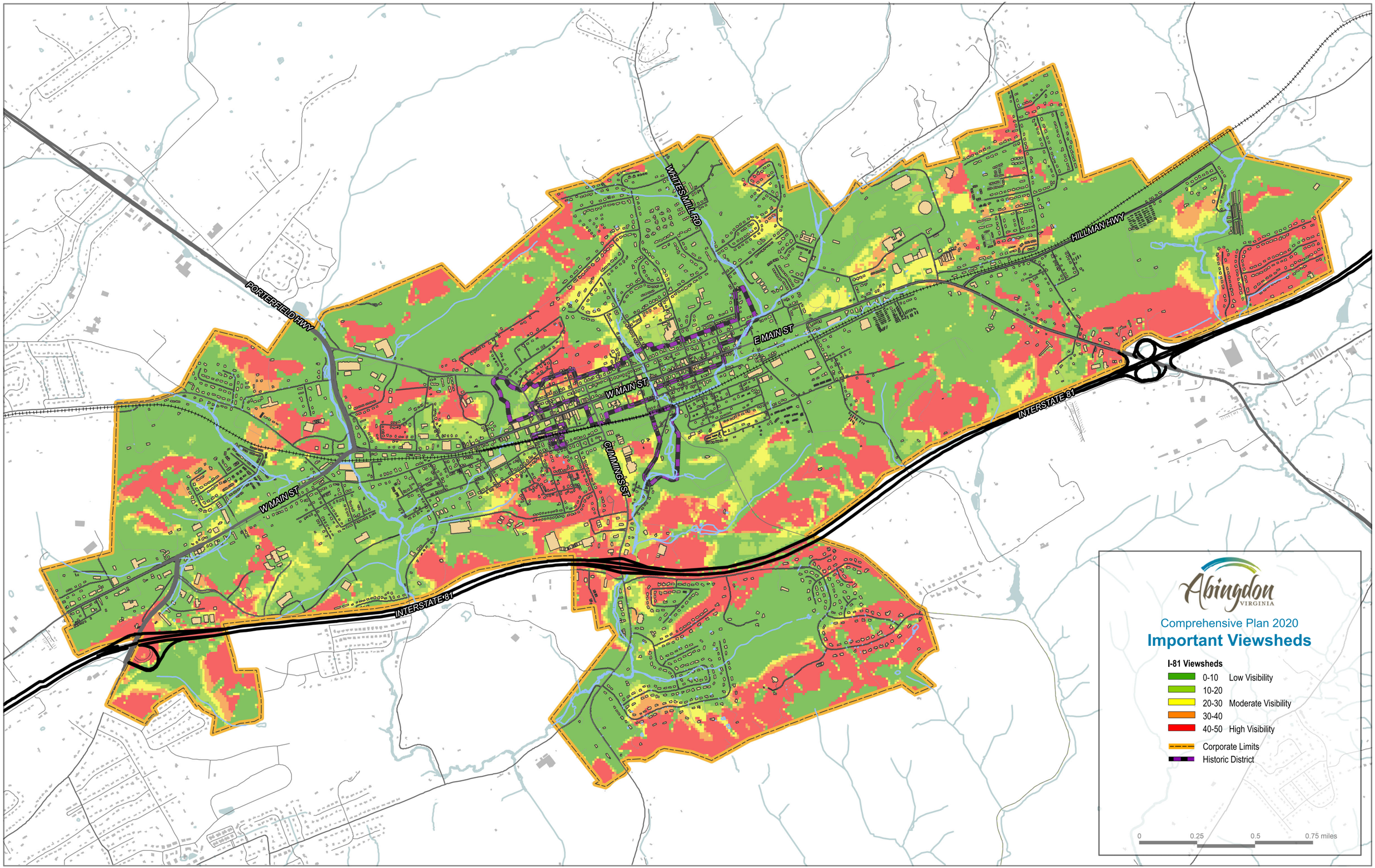
Virginia Creeper Trail

The Virginia Creeper Trail is the primary greenway connection used by most citizens and visitors. Other than this primary facility, there are few non-motorized connections in town. Specific connections recommended for future consideration include:

- Connection to the Barter Campus,
- Connection from the Farmers Market to Veterans Memorial Park,
- Connection linking William King Regional Arts Center and Dubose-Foster Fields by Academy Drive,
- Connection to William King Regional Arts Center from downtown and Depot Square,
- Connection to Main Street Park and William King Regional Arts Center, and
- Sidewalks/trails connections that are designated as “safe routes to schools” for the middle and high school campus.

Note that the specific design for these greenway and pedestrian connections will vary based on location and type of trail needs. Since the Virginia Creeper Trail is located as an off-road greenway with dedicated right-of-way, this design should be utilized where possible on all new connecting greenways. Pedestrian connections along streets should utilize existing and new sidewalks.

In addition to the need for more greenway connections, citizens have expressed their concerns for increasing visual and physical encroachments on the Virginia Creeper Trail from adjacent development along the corridor. This special recreational amenity is important to the overall social and economic health of the community, and therefore, should be protected. Encroachment issues that should be addressed include access to and across the trail, increased buffers for adjacent development, and architectural standards for structures visible from the corridor. At the present time, the town requires new structures to be set back 35 feet from the Creeper Trail right-of-way but should consider larger setbacks to preserve the trail experience for users.


PORTERFIELD HWY
WHITES MILL RD
HILLMAN HWY
E MAIN ST
W MAIN ST
W MAIN ST
CUMMINGS ST
INTERSTATE 81
INTERSTATE 81
Abingdon
VIRGINIA
Comprehensive Plan 2020
Important Viewsheds
I-81 Viewsheds
0-10 Low Visibility
10-20
20-30 Moderate Visibility
30-40
40-50 High Visibility
Corporate Limits
Historic District
0
0.25
0.5
0.75 miles

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

1. Abingdon's residents will have exceptional parks and recreational facilities in walking distance of their homes.
1.1. In planning for new and upgraded pedestrian amenities, prioritize projects that make connections to parks and recreational facilities. 1.2. Revise development regulations to require the provision of high-quality active and passive open space in any new residential development. 1.3. Pursue parks and recreation funding through all available Virginia Department of Transportation, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, and other applicable state and federal granting agencies, as well as through private donation or corporate sponsorship.
2. The Town's scenic open spaces and regional recreational facilities are important economic and social amenities that will be protected.
2.1. Continue to discourage development in areas of Abingdon that are highly visible to vehicles traveling on Interstate 81. 2.2. Pursue conservation easements for key open space properties within the Town.
3. Abingdon will be known as a hub of outdoor recreation and regional trails, with a diverse array of opportunities available within and near the Town.
3.1. Aggressively promote Abingdon's trails and recreation opportunities to state-wide and nation-wide audiences as a crucial part of the town's economic development activities. 3.2. Complete construction of the planned Town sports complex as an amenity for town residents and as a regional attraction that supports Abingdon's economy. 3.3. Study the potential designation of a Creeper Trail overlay zone to provide additional protection from adjacent development. 3.4. Work with Washington County and other regional authorities on new regional trails and extensions, including the proposed state-crossing Beaches-to-Bluegrass Trail and trail connections between Emory, Glade Spring, Bristol, and other destinations.

Chapter 6

ARTS, CULTURE, AND HISTORY

CHAPTER 6 - ARTS, CULTURE, AND HISTORY

ARTS, CULTURE, AND HISTORY

- Brief History of Abingdon
- Arts, Culture and Historic Assets
- Preservation Regulations
- Opportunities and Issues
    - Downtown
    - Public Art
- Goals
- Strategies

The arts, culture and history of Abingdon have been the traditional foundation for the growth and development of the community. These special attributes contribute greatly to the town's quality of life and to its social and economic fabric. It comes as no surprise that these elements are consistently rated by residents and visitors as among the most important assets to be protected and enhanced for the future well-being of the town and the region. Consequently, this comprehensive plan focuses on building on the arts and culture of Abingdon in order to achieve a creative and sustainable future.

Abingdon is considered the cultural and historic center of southwest Virginia. Since the early 1900s, the town has placed a tremendous emphasis on education, the arts, and historic preservation. With the establishment of the Barter Theatre and the Martha Washington Inn in the 1930s, Abingdon became widely appreciated destination for its history, architecture, and art. In the 1970s, the town was one of the first communities in Virginia to establish an architectural review board and adopt an historic preservation ordinance.

HISTORY OF ABINGDON

The Town of Abingdon is rich in history and tradition. Because of its location on the Great Valley Road leading from the Pennsylvania and the Shenandoah Valley to the Cumberland Gap, it was an area of early interest and settlement. It is recognized as the oldest English-speaking settlement west of the Alleghenies/Blue Ridge Mountains. Early surveyors explored the area in the mid-1700s. These included Dr. Thomas Walker, a physician and early explorer/surveyor of southwestern Virginia who discovered the Cumberland Gap in 1750; and later Daniel Boone,

noted pioneer and explorer of the American frontier who blazed the Wilderness Road through the Cumberland Gap in 1775.

Abingdon was part of a 6,780-acre tract of land granted by King George II to Dr. Thomas Walker in 1752. The town was initially known as Wolf Hills, after an encounter by Daniel Boone with wolves while in the area. Later, the community was known as Black's Fort (1774) in recognition of a fort constructed by Joseph Black for Indian protection. In 1776, the town was recognized as the county seat of Washington County when the first court met at Black's Fort. In 1778, the town was incorporated as Abingdon.

There are several versions of how the name, Abingdon, was derived. Tradition holds that Abingdon is named in honor of Martha Washington in recognition of her home parish where she worshipped as a girl near Mount Vernon; however, other historical theories indicate that the town was named in honor of Lord Abingdon, a young English nobleman who was a close acquaintance of General William Campbell, a commander of the King's Mountain Men during the important Battle of King's Mountain in the Revolutionary War. Still another version is that Abingdon's name is associated with Daniel Boone's first residence in America - Abington, Pennsylvania, whose founders hailed from Berkshire, England, specifically the market town of Abingdon. Regardless of the origin of its name, the town is associated with early, well known persons who have contributed immensely to the region and the nation.

Abingdon prospered in the 1800s because of its location on the Great Valley Road, and its location on the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad (later operated by the Norfolk & Western Railway and Norfolk Southern Railroad). According to the National Register of Historic Places nomination form submitted to the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Abingdon was described in 1845 as a town of more than 1,000 persons built on an elevation with many brick buildings and a macadamized principal street, surrounded by a fertile, settled, agricultural county. Although parts of the town were burned during the Civil War, Abingdon retains a historic charm that is cherished by residents and visitors alike.

Abingdon also has traditionally been recognized for its emphasis on education. Originally the home of the Abingdon Male Academy (1803), Martha Washington College (1860), and Stonewall Jackson Female Institute/Stonewall Jackson College (1869), the town now includes the Virginia Highlands Community College, Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center, and has close ties to nearby Emory and Henry College.

CHAPTER 6 - ARTS, CULTURE, AND HISTORY

ARTS, CULTURE, AND HISTORIC ASSETS

Today, Abingdon is noted for its wealth of arts, cultural, and historic assets and attractions, including museums, schools, theaters, and historic buildings. The town is proud of its 18th, 19th and early 20th century dwellings, churches, and commercial buildings which include such architectural styles as Federal, Greek Revival, Italianate, Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, Bungalow, and Tudor Revival. Today, Abingdon is a certified local government recognized by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources.

The Abingdon Historic District lies in the heart of town. The district was initially placed on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places in 1970 and expanded in 1986. The district is noteworthy because of its architectural character and its role in the growth and development of the community. The district contains over 250 frame and brick buildings that date from the 19th and early 20th centuries that include a diversity of architectural styles. The oldest building in Abingdon is the Tavern (222 East Main Street) circa 1779, which was an early tavern and inn for stagecoach travelers.

In addition to the Abingdon Historic District, there are two additional properties that are listed on the National Register and the Virginia Landmarks Register. These properties are the Abingdon Bank and Dr. William H. Pitts House, both on East Main Street, and Mont Calm near Green Spring Road. Other significant historic properties, including Sinking Spring Cemetery (1776), General Francis Preston Home/Martha Washington Inn (1832) William King School (1913), and the Washington County Courthouse (1869).

In 1998, a survey and inventory of historic properties and areas was conducted. Approximately 325 properties in Abingdon were surveyed and documented as contributing properties at that time. Other historic properties still remain to be surveyed, including mid-century buildings that are now considered contributing historic structures. Areas that may be eligible as National Register Historic Districts include: Depot Square, Stonewall Heights, and Stonewall Jackson College. Properties that may be individually eligible include: Retirement (Craig,1808), Grafton (White,1874), Oakland (Branch/Cosby, 1835), Ackland (Greenway, 1859), Clapp House (1828), and Lustron House (1950).

CHAPTER 6 - ARTS, CULTURE, AND HISTORY

The William King Museum of Art is located on 25 acres west of downtown Abingdon. The museum is located in the historic 1913 William King High School which has been adapted for the facility. The museum receives broad funding support at the federal, state, and local levels and is nationally accredited by the American Association of Museums. The museum is a partner of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts and a member of the American Association of Museums, the Virginia Association of Museums, and the Southeastern Museums Conference. The facility houses exhibitions of world cultures, regional historic heritage and contemporary art, and a niche program called the "Cultural Heritage Project" that documents over 2,000 records of material culture and crafts made in the Southwest Virginia and Northeast Tennessee from 1780-1940. In addition, the center provides arts programming for school audiences in fourteen school districts as an alternative, innovative method of teaching art in the public schools.

In 2004, the Virginia Tobacco Indemnification and Community Revitalization Commission funded a facility master plan and schematic design to expand the center, with additional funds contributed by the Appalachian Regional Commission, Washington County, and Town of Abingdon. The master plan would ultimately provide for two new buildings, improved parking, realigned roads, an enhanced museum entrance, an amphitheater, and an outdoor sculpture garden.

A companion facility of the arts center is the Fields-Penn House (1860), located on West Main Street at Cummings Street. A property of the Town of Abingdon, the house museum features regional furnishings from the permanent collection of the William King Museum of Art.

The Barter Theatre was founded in 1932 by Robert Porterfield, a young actor who returned to Southwest Virginia during the Depression. He opened the theatre in 1933, furnishing it with salvaged items from New York's Empire Theatre (1875), including a lighting system designed by Thomas Edison. The theatre got its name from the "barter system" used to pay for entertainment; actors performed in exchange for fruit, vegetables, livestock, and other agricultural products. The Barter Theatre was designated the State Theatre of Virginia in 1946. It has a long list of awards, celebrated accomplishments, and recognition by famous persons.

The building was constructed in 1831 for the Sinking Springs Presbyterian Church. The Town of Abingdon owns the building and used it as a town hall, jail, and fire hall before it was used for the theatre.

CHAPTER 6 - ARTS, CULTURE, AND HISTORY

The Barter Campus extends across Main Street to the former grounds of the former Jackson Female Institute / Stonewall Jackson College. The Barter Green, or Stonewall Jackson Square, is used for outdoor exhibitions. A second venue located here, Barter Stage II, was renovated in 1961 and contains approximately 140 seats. The original building was built in 1831 as a Methodist Protestant Church; it was also used at one point by Martha Washington College.

The Martha Washington Inn was built in 1832 as the private residence of General Francis Preston and Sarah Buchanan Preston. In 1860, the house was converted to a school for young women, Martha Washington College, which operated until 1926. It was during this period that the local residents lovingly referred to the building as “the Martha”. In 1935, the building was opened as a hotel. It is said that many famous guests have stayed there, including Eleanor Roosevelt, President Harry Truman, Lady Bird Johnston, Jimmy Carter, and Elizabeth Taylor. Today, the inn is operated as a four-diamond hotel consisting of 62 guestrooms, banquet and meeting rooms, restaurant, deli, pool, and spa.

PRESERVATION REGULATIONS

In order to preserve the unique historic character of the town’s downtown core, promote historic resources for economic development, and promote quality of life and a sense of place for residents and visitors, Abingdon has established the Old and Historic District within the town’s Zoning Ordinance. Like many zoning districts, the Old and Historic zone regulates land uses, setbacks, building heights, and other aspects of land development in a way that is compatible with existing buildings within the district. Unlike other zoning districts, the Old and Historic zone also regulates the architectural appearance of new or renovated buildings to maintain the unique and historic appearance of this important area. Applying to the general area of Main and Valley Streets between Russell Road and Mill Road, no building in this zone may be built, demolished, or substantially altered without obtaining a Certificate of Appropriateness attesting to the compatibility of the proposed work with the historic character of the area. Certificates of Appropriateness are granted by an appointed Board of Architectural Review according to design guidelines established for the district.

OPPORTUNITIES AND ISSUES

Arts, culture, and history will continue to be major themes in the future development and economic success of Abingdon. As an attraction to visitors, the town’s historic downtown, cultural institutions, and arts venues help to provide a steady stream of business, employment, and

income to the town and its residents. These same features also serve as amenities that help to attract and retain residents who appreciate arts, culture, and history for their contributions to the town's overall quality of life and property values.

DOWNTOWN

As the major hub of Abingdon's arts and culture community, the downtown Main Street core will continue to be the focus of cultural opportunities in the town. The Town should continue to seek not just individual venues in the downtown, but to create a complete arts and culture district that benefits all venues, businesses, and stakeholders together. Designation of downtown Abingdon as a Main Street America Affiliate Community and the leadership of Abingdon Main Street Inc. can help to boost the revitalization of downtown and improve its economy and physical appearance. This will require a committed partnership effort between Main Street merchants, the Main Street coordinator, and other stakeholders, as well as the ongoing support and financial assistance of town government. Increased tourism and business investment will require extended hours of operation, expanded services, and additional opportunities for downtown living to create a vibrant, active district.

PUBLIC ART

In addition to the impressive architecture, performing arts, and cultural heritage, Abingdon offers outstanding examples of public art. There are numerous statues and sculptures located throughout town, in well-landscaped plazas and courtyards. These include the bronze Confederate Soldier at the Courthouse, the Yellow Ribbon Sculpture in Veterans Memorial Park, and other sculptures on the Barter Green and at the William King Regional Arts Center sculpture garden. There are also historic interiors that display significant works of art. Some of most spectacular ones are the Tiffany stained-glass window in the historic Washington County Courthouse, the interior of St. Thomas Episcopal Church, which was modeled after a 14th Century monastery, the altar rail at St. John's Lutheran Church, forged by a local blacksmith and gravestones at Sinking Springs Cemetery to name a few.

Public art is a relatively simple and inexpensive way to support the uniqueness and community character of Abingdon. The town should support the continued provision of public art through flexible regulations, as well as through small financial grants or other program assistance, favor local artists and art that exemplifies the history and themes of Abingdon and its region.

The future success of additional arts, culture and historical initiatives will require continued protection of assets, public education regarding their value, and excellent communication with various organizations.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

1. Abingdon will maintain its reputation for talented artisans, diverse cultural opportunities, and architectural and archaeological history.
1.1. Support local organizations working to expand town venues and schedule year-round events and activities for residents and visitors. 1.2. Set aside a small portion of the Town's budget to be used exclusively for public art and cultural enhancements.
2. Artists will be able to find affordable housing and studio space in Abingdon.
2.1. Investigate zoning ordinance changes that can improve the availability of affordable housing by diversifying the type and density of available housing and lower barriers to housing investment.
3. Abingdon will welcome both new and traditional forms of artistic expression.
3.1. Develop an arts master plan that inventories arts and culture venues, agencies, programs, and offerings, and establishes ongoing coordination between the town and arts stakeholders. 3.2. Develop the Depot Square area as an arts and entertainment district.
4. The Town's standards for preservation will maintain the look and feel of its historic districts while allowing for economically viable reuse of the structures.
4.1. Work with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources to undertake additional historic surveys of Abingdon and recognize historic assets through local or National Register listings. 4.2. Continually update the historic district's Design Review Guidelines to present clear, high-quality guidance that protects the town's historic fabric while not unduly burdening homeowners and investors. 4.3. Provide financial incentives and/or technical assistance to encourage appropriate rehabilitation of historic properties in targeted revitalization areas. Consider such methods as façade grants, tax abatement programs, and others. 4.4. Study potential expansion of the town's historic district to include additional areas of town. 4.5. Revise the zoning ordinance to include a conservation overlay district that is less stringent than the historic district, yet address new construction, additions, and demolitions to protect important neighborhoods or areas that contribute to Abingdon's historic and architectural qualities.

Chapter 7

TOURISM

CHAPTER 7 - TOURISM

TOURISM

- Facts and Figures
    - Tourism Features
    - Tourism Revenue
- Opportunities and Issues
    - Tourism Workforce
    - Events
    - Partnerships
- Goals
- Strategies

Tourism continues to be a cornerstone of the life and economy of Abingdon. The town draws visitors who appreciate the town's quaint and historic downtown, attend major festivals and events, enjoy the Barter Theatre, patronize the Martha Washington Inn and Spa, and use the town as a starting point to explore the Virginia Creeper Trail. Tourism has a long history in Abingdon but has been an especially important part of the local economy since the founding of the Barter Theatre and Martha Washington Inn in the 1930s. Tourism benefits the local economy as visitors support local businesses and contribute to the local tax base through lodging and other taxes. Visitors also require comparatively few local services. While Abingdon desires and continues to work toward a more diverse local economy, tourism will remain an important piece of the town's future.

FACTS AND FIGURES

Historical and cultural attractions make Abingdon an important tourist destination. In addition to traditional historic downtown and theater-driven tourism, Abingdon is using partnerships and regional resources to attract new visitors.

Abingdon is located on "The Crooked Road", Virginia's heritage music trail. With music, a great opportunity for further cultural tourism and economic contribution, Abingdon will continue to pursue a goal of supporting local music venues and events, including using public venues such as the Farmers Market and Community Pavilion and the pavilion at Main Street Park to provide venues for musical events. The Town will work

closely with The Crooked Road, whose offices are located in Abingdon, to support forms of traditional music in the community.

Abingdon is also home to the newly opened Southwest Virginia Cultural Center & Marketplace, a 29,000 square foot facility designed to introduce Southwest Virginia to the world. This facility is home to the offices of The Crooked Road, and serves as a visitor center, retail center for local and regional crafts, music venue, and community gathering space. The Center is located near a major entrance corridor to the town and Interstate interchange and is a major asset in serving tourists and capturing pass-by highway traffic.

Abingdon's tourism market is also heavily influenced by major festivals and community events that attract visitors and provide a cultural outlet for locals. The town hosts several major festivals throughout the year. The largest of these is the Virginia Highlands Festival, which began more than 70 years ago. Other popular festivals held in and around Abingdon include the Overmountain Victory Trail Celebration, Garden Tour of homes, Downtown Christmas Celebration, Summer Concert Series, Plumb Alley Day, the Washington County Fair, Abingdon Music Experience events, and numerous other holiday and seasonal celebrations.

The Virginia Highlands Festival was first organized by Robert Porterfield, founder of the Barter Theatre, to showcase the area's cultural heritage. The festival has grown to a regional festival for all of Southwest Virginia, celebrating the arts, crafts, and performing arts of the region. Today, the Highlands Festival attracts more than 200,000 people during its 9-day celebration in early August. The festival is now billed as one of the top 100 tourist events in North America and one of the top 20 in the Southeast. Activities and displays during the festival include arts, crafts, musical performances, an antique flea market and car show, tours of historic homes, theatre productions and more. Most activities are staged in the historic district including the Juried Craft Show at Barter Green. Other festival activities are held at Virginia Highlands Community College. In 2004, the economic impact of the festival to Abingdon and the region was estimated to be $75 million.

Overmountain Victory Trail Celebration is held annually in September to recreate the area soldiers' march to Kings Mountain to fight in the Revolutionary War, over two hundred years ago. There are four days of re-enactments, including exhibitions on soldier life and how to make salt, wheels, and pottery.

The Downtown Christmas Celebration is conducted annually by the Hometown Merchants Association to celebrate the Christmas season.

Plumb Alley Day is another increasingly popular celebration centered in downtown Abingdon. Founded in 1982, this community event stretches along the quaint alley between Main and Valley Street. Activities vary from year to year, but generally include a parade, musical entertainment, food and craft vendors, and activities geared specially to children. The festival is a major fundraiser for the Kiwanis Club of Abingdon, with proceeds supporting local charities and non-profit organizations. Plumb Alley Day is traditionally held on the Saturday of Memorial Day weekend.

The Washington County Fair is held every September at the county fairgrounds just west of Abingdon. The festival features daily exhibits of farm equipment, tobacco, livestock, and other agricultural commodities. Live entertainment is scheduled throughout the week, including concerts, talent shows, beauty pageants and a parade.

Abingdon Music Experience events are hosted by the Abingdon Convention and Visitors Bureau and include a variety of musical events including January Jams at the Barter Theatre, Thursday Jams, a free weekly concert series during the summer, Creeperfest, focused on outdoor recreation and Abingdon's most famous trail, and Buskerfest, a Main Street event featuring unusual performers such as sword swallowers and fire jugglers.

The Abingdon Convention and Visitors Bureau was first established in 1989 to organize and promote tourism in the town. Its mission is to encourage travel and tourism development and provide the technical assistance and services needed to expand the industry.

The bureau operates a Visitors Center in the historic Hassinger House at 335 Cummings Street. The Convention and Visitors Bureau employs a full-time staff and the visitors center, staffed with part-time employees, welcomes over 13,000 patrons annually. In addition to operation of the Visitors Center, the bureau is responsible for marketing Abingdon as a visitor destination through its strategic marketing plan. The bureau designs and creates brochures, promotional items, videos, and activities, and provides information to the public. The Convention and Visitors Bureau's work in group sales promotes Abingdon as a group destination and has positively influenced hotel occupancy over the past three years by hosting leisure travel, professional groups, family reunions, and others.

Tourism contributes to the local economy mainly through lodging and meals taxes, a contribution of between $3.8 and $4.0 million dollars annually, rising slightly over the past several years. In addition, employment in arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food service industries represent approximately 12% of all jobs in Abingdon. For the larger Washington County area tourism spending makes an even larger contribution, accounting for more than $110 million in revenue for the year 2018, a figure rising rapidly.

CHAPTER 7 - TOURISM

Yearly 2018 Tourism Spending in Washington County
Generated **$110.3M** in direct tourism spending.
Produced **$24.3M** in worker paychecks.
Created **$2.6M** in county tax revenue.
Sustained over **1,200** jobs.
2018 tourism spending increased **3.6%** from 2017.

On an Average Day Tourism Spending Generates
$7,081 daily in county revenues.
$13,299 daily in state revenues.
$64,723 daily in paychecks.

Tax Relief on County Households
Each of the 22,512 households in Washington County pay **$330 LESS** in state and county taxes. If tourism spending did not exist in Washington County each household would pay $300 more in county and state taxes to replace tourism spending.

CHAPTER 7 - TOURISM

OPPORTUNITIES AND ISSUES

TOURISM WORKFORCE

Even as Abingdon works to expand and diversify the local economy, tourism will remain a major industry and contributor to local revenues and employment. In its efforts to promote tourism and encourage new venues and partnerships, the Town should strive to elevate tourism industry jobs to stable, well-paid professions by encouraging sustainable and high-quality tourism venues.

EVENTS AND ATTRACTIONS

The Town's tourism profile and revenues are supported by the area's many festivals and events. The town and its tourism partners should continue to expand event offerings to provide a steady, year-round supply of tourism attractions. A steady and varied calendar of events can help to provide reliable and sustainable income to local businesses and further enhance local tax revenues, while providing steady employment to accommodations, food service, and other tourism-industry workers.

REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

As Abingdon continues to establish itself as the hub of a larger Southwest Virginia region, it should continue to take advantage of regional partnerships and linkages to enhance tourism and tourism spending. Just as The Crooked Road provides a means to tie together individual sites and venues to be collectively marketed as a larger experience, many Virginia localities and regions participate in historical, agricultural, arts, brewing, and other trails and partnerships that help smaller points of interest, venues, and businesses achieve larger exposure and returns through collective marketing.

CHAPTER 7 - TOURISM

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

1. Abingdon will have a thriving tourism economy built upon three main pillars – the arts, history, and outdoor recreation.
1.1. Use maps, signage, walking tours, and other means to promote tourist sites and amenities in all areas of the town. 1.2. Continue to actively promote Abingdon as a tourist destination, promoting events, sites, venues, opportunities, and attractions to a nation-wide audience. 1.3. Coordinate tourism promotion with Bristol and other nearby destinations to enhance the overall marketing of Southwest Virginia. 1.4. Work with Virginia Highlands Community College and other applicable organizations to improve training and retention among the tourism workforce.
2. The Town will have a wide variety of options, such as lodging, restaurants, experiences, retail, tours, and culinary events to meet the needs of visitors of all ages and interests.
2.1. Use the Town's significant web and media presence to coordinate events and experiences that connect tourists to multiple Abingdon businesses or venues to improve visitor experience and extend stays. 2.2. Provide and active and accessible Convention and Visitors Bureau to connect tourists with local businesses and attractions.
3. Abingdon will invest in activities, amenities, and experiences to meet the changing needs for repeat and new travelers.
3.1. Develop a walking tour and map to showcase significant public art in Abingdon. 3.2. Encourage and promote sustainable business opportunities in Abingdon. Promote heritage tourism and eco-tourism, small-scale businesses offering specialty products/services, and artisan crafts of Southwest Virginia.

Chapter 8

ENVIRONMENT AND QUALITY OF LIFE

CHAPTER 8 - ENVIRONMENT AND QUALITY OF LIFE

ENVIRONMENT AND QUALITY OF LIFE

- Facts and Figures
  - Geography
  - Urban Forestry
  - Geology and Soils
  - Watersheds
  - Wildlife
- Opportunities and Issues
  - Urban Tree Plan
- Goals
- Strategies

The environmental and natural features of Abingdon influence the health of the community and the quality of life for residents. Consequently, community plans should encourage protection and responsible stewardship of these amenities. Important environmental features to consider in long-term planning include such resources as mountains, trees, soils, wildlife, and streams. All of these natural features are affected by development and should be considered in public and private undertakings to sustain the high environmental quality found in Abingdon.

FACTS AND FIGURES

GEOGRAPHY

Abingdon is located in the Valley and Ridge Physiographic Province of Virginia, an area characterized by linear ridges and fertile valleys. Elevations in Abingdon range from 1,934 to 2,316 feet above sea level, while the Town enjoys scenic vistas of higher elevations to the east and west. The Blue Ridge Mountains form the ridgelines to the east, while the Cumberland Mountains form the ridge lines to the west. A slope analysis of Abingdon shows approximately two-thirds of the town's land has a slope of 20% or less, making this land relatively accessible for potential development or agriculture, while approximately one-third of the town exhibits slopes greater than 25%. Disturbance of slopes over 25%

for development or agriculture should generally be avoided to minimize erosion and other environmental harm.

Abingdon has long been known as a community that cherishes its trees. The town is recognized as a Tree City USA. Trees play a vital role in contributing to Abingdon's character and quality of life by adding visual interest and value to the landscape. The town is surrounded by forested lands in the George Washington & Jefferson National Forest. Beyond the visual appeal, the trees reduce home energy costs, influence property values, provide safety and shade to pedestrians, manage storm water runoff quantity and quality, and calm traffic. Trees provide town residents with green surroundings that provide a quality environment for social activities, a sense of place, and attractive natural settings.

URBAN FORESTRY

In 2001, town council established the Abingdon Tree Commission. Appointed by council, the commission consists of five members. An arborist is employed by the town and is assigned to the commission to guide conservation activities and provide technical assistance. The purpose of the commission and corresponding ordinance (officially known as the Vegetation Ordinance) is to establish and maintain maximum tree cover, promote conservation of tree resources, promote the health and development of Abingdon's urban forest, and foster community support for an urban forestry program. The ordinance applies to all trees and shrubs planted in public areas. Both the arborist and the commission are active in developing guidance on tree planting, advising the creation and modification of development regulations, and promoting trees as a community asset.

In 2007, a tree inventory was initiated using a matching grant from the Virginia Department of Forestry. This initiative provided technical information on the location of trees and produced a comprehensive tree management plan, which evaluated tree coverage, tree species utilization, and made recommendations for improvements and changes.

In addition to the inventory, the commission and arborist are active in providing training to town crews and others regarding the proper pruning, planting, and maintenance of trees. Education is a primary goal to increase public awareness of the trees and best management practices for tree conservation and growth.

Complementing the urban forest initiatives, Abingdon has three official arboretums within its town limits:

1. The campus at Virginia Highlands Community College specializes in non-native species research. The campus arboretum is managed by the college's horticulturist. Also, the campus contains an orchard of heritage apple trees.

2. Valley Street, Russell Road, and "A" Street are designated as "utility line arboretums" by the Virginia Department of Forestry. These streets have extensive plantings of power line compatible trees and are part of the Virginia Municipal Tree Restoration Project that received international attention.

3. Veterans Memorial Park is designated as an arboretum by Abingdon Town Council. It is noted as one of the Best Tree Places in Virginia by the Remarkable Trees of Virginia Project. Individuals and families may purchase trees for planting in honor of a veteran. Currently, trees are being planted on the south side of the park behind the main sign and flags. The middle section of the park holds large, stately trees adjacent to a children's playground. The northern section of the park contains two major tree research plots. The first plot is managed by the Hampton Roads Agricultural Research Experiment Station, a satellite post of Virginia Tech; utility-friendly trees are being grown in several locations throughout the state to test their ability to prosper in the various climates and soils of Virginia. The second plot is managed by the American Chestnut Foundation and contains the new species of American Chestnut. Ultimately, these trees will be inoculated with chestnut blight to determine blight resistance and to provide seeds for further research.

GEOLOGY AND SOILS

Abingdon is located in the Valley and Ridge Physiographic Province of Virginia. A map of the provinces in Virginia is shown below. As illustrated in the map, the Valley and Ridge province runs the north-south length of Virginia from Tennessee north to West Virginia and Maryland and lies between the Blue Ridge Mountains and the Alleghany Plateau. Linear ridges characterize the Valley and Ridge and valleys with carbonate, limestone rocks in the valleys (erosive) and sandstone and quartzite rocks in the ridges (erosion resistant). Abingdon is located in the Great Valley Sub-province, which contains mostly valleys with higher elevations on the perimeter. Elevations in Abingdon range from 1,934 to 2,316 feet mean sea level (msl).

CHAPTER 8 - ENVIRONMENT AND QUALITY OF LIFE

Abingdon exhibits scenic vistas of the neighboring mountains to the east and west. The Blue Ridge Mountains form the ridgelines to the east, while the Cumberland Mountains form the ridge lines to the west. Significant mountains visible from Abingdon include Holston Mountain and Iron Mountains (south), and Mount Rogers/White Top (southeast), and Clinch and Walker Mountain (north and east). A slope analysis conducted for the previous Comprehensive Plan found that approximately two-thirds of the town's land has a slope of 20 percent or less; approximately one-third of the town exhibits slopes are greater than 25 percent.

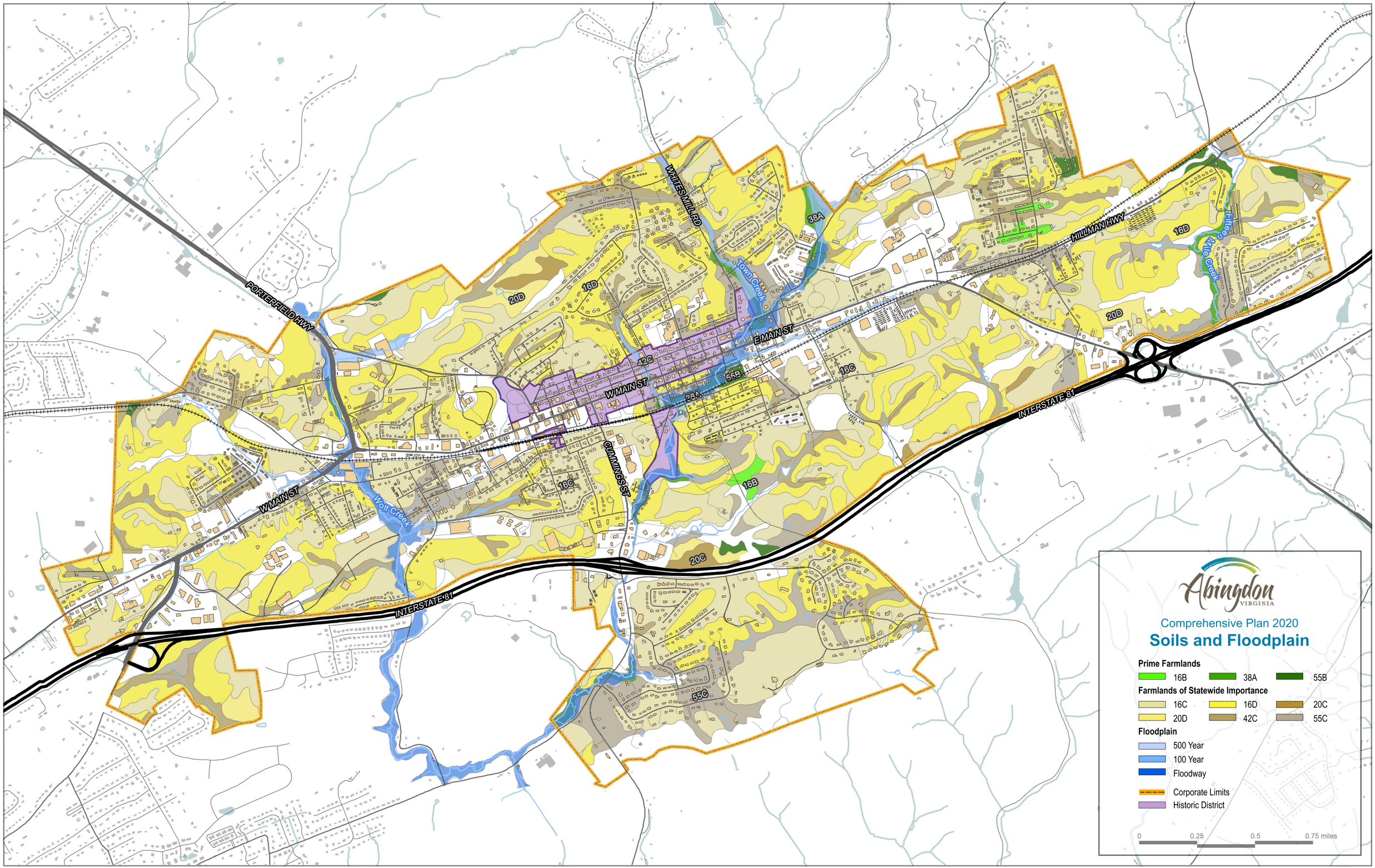
Mapping from the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation shows that Washington County lies in a region that exhibits karst topography (areas with caves, sinkholes). Carbonate rocks that underlay the region (limestone, dolomite and others) are water soluble, creating opportunities for ground and surface waters to intrude, leaving fractures and holes. Consequently, major development projects should investigate the potential for karst features.

The U.S.D.A. Natural Resource Conservation Service published a soil survey of Washington County and the City of Bristol in 2006. Based on web soil survey information, the Town of Abingdon contains Frederick silt loams (approximately 50 percent), Weikert silt loams (approximately 15 percent), Udorthents/urban land (9 percent), Hagerstown silt loams (approximately 8 percent), Wyrick-Marbie complex (approximately 7 percent), as well as other soil classifications. The Frederick silt loams are particularly suited for croplands and pastures; typically, they are well-drained and deep. The Weikert and Hagerstown silt loams are upland soils that are shallow to bedrock and exhibit rock out-croppings; they are well-suited for forests. The Udorthents soils are those disturbed by development. The Wyrick-Marbie complex soils are lowland soils; they are subject to flooding and particularly suited for pastures.

According to the soil survey, many of the soils in Abingdon are especially important for agriculture. These soils are particularly important to consider when conducting environmental reviews of projects, especially those involving state and federal funds. Also, they are important in enhancing and preserving the agricultural heritage and productivity of the region.

WATERSHEDS

Abingdon is located within the watersheds of the North and Middle Forks of the Holston River, part of the Tennessee and Big Sandy River Basins. South Holston Lake (7,850 acres) is located southwest of town, and extends from Washington County, Virginia to Sullivan County, Tennessee. The lake is owned and operated by the Tennessee Valley Authority and provides hydroelectric


Abingdon
VIRGINIA
Comprehensive Plan 2020
Soils and Floodplain
Prime Farmlands
16B
38A
55B
Farmlands of Statewide Importance
16C
16D
20C
20D
42C
55C
Floodplain
500 Year
100 Year
Floodway
Corporate Limits
Historic District
0
0.25
0.5
0.75 miles
PORTERFIELD HWY
WHITES MILL RD
HILLMAN HWY
E MAIN ST
W MAIN ST
CUMMINGS ST
INTERSTATE 81
Town Creek
Wolf Creek
Little Creek
38A
16D
20D
42C
55B
16C
16B
20C
55C

power for the region. The major streams located in the town are: Wolf Creek, Town Creek, Berry Creek, and Fifteen Mile Creek. The floodplains of these streams are shown on the following map.

According to the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality's 2018 Water Quality Assessment, segments of Wolf Creek and Town Creek within Abingdon are listed as impaired with high levels of E. coli bacteria. This contamination is caused by the unrestricted access of livestock to these streams, a problem that may originate in rural areas outside of the Town itself. Consequently, improvement to water quality and further study are recommended to determine appropriate actions. To address the quality of surface waters in town and reduce non-point sources of pollution, Abingdon should continue to work with Washington County to address regional water quality issues that affect the Town.

The public water system for the Town of Abingdon draws water from several sources including the Middle Fork of the Holston River, the South Fork of the Holston River, and several springs. All of these sources are filtered to remove particulate matter, chlorinated for disinfection, and fluoridated for the promotion of dental health. According to the 2018 Water Quality Report published by the Washington County Service Authority, Abingdon's public drinking water meets all established water quality requirements as well as all reporting and monitoring requirements of the Virginia Department of Health and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

WILDLIFE

In 2005, the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries prepared a Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy which identified approximately 1,000 species in Virginia in need of conservation. Threats for these species included habitat destruction, deterioration in water quality from pollution and sedimentation. Based on the data collected, Washington County is included as an important ecological region that contains species identified for conservation. Abingdon is described as being located in the Ridge and Valley Holston Ecological Region. The list includes 62 species consisting of 32 fish, 17 mussels, 3 snails, 2 insects, and 4 crawfish.
Those species of most concern (Tier 1) in the region include: spotfin chub*, sharphead darter, yellowfin madtom*, Tennessee dace, tan riffleshell*, shiny pigtoe*, little-wing pearlymussel*, bottle hornsnail, and rough rabbitsfoot*. Those species noted with an * are listed as Federal Endangered or Threatened Species.

CHAPTER 8 - ENVIRONMENT AND QUALITY OF LIFE

OPPORTUNITIES AND ISSUES

Abingdon's environment and natural beauty are assets to residents and visitors. Open spaces, agriculture, scenic vistas, trees, and nearby National Forests contribute to the social and economic well-being of Abingdon and form a part of the town's unique character. As development and change continues over time special efforts will be needed to protect the community's environmental quality and natural features. This will require coordination with developers, Washington County, and with applicable state and federal agencies and organizations. Enhancing and preserving the green infrastructure of Abingdon will help the community achieve its vision for the future. Public education and increased awareness of the town's environmental features will be critical in assisting and supporting town officials in land development decisions. Maintaining and enhancing the ecology and the natural landscape of Abingdon and the surrounding county should be a priority for the community's long-term health and well-being.

URBAN TREE PLAN

Trees make an important contribution to Abingdon's natural environment, including both stands of forest and individual plantings on both public and private lands, and should be planned and promoted for the future. The Town's 2007 tree inventory, funded using a matching grant from the Virginia Department of Forestry, should be updated for current conditions. While existing tree plans and regulations apply mainly to trees on public lands, the plan may also use the expertise of the tree commission and town arborist to provide useful information to private property owners on promote the benefits of tree planting, to recommend appropriate or native tree species, or provide other guidance. The tree plan should also address the provision of street trees for Abingdon's streets, providing guidance on location, spacing, species, and other parameters to improve shade and enhance the appeal of the town's pedestrian network.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

1. Abingdon will be a clean and healthy community that protects natural features through high environmental standards for public and private activities and the built environment.
1.1. Revise the town's zoning and stormwater management regulations to incorporate low impact development techniques, stream buffers, and other features in new developments that protect environmental health. 1.2. Undertake a watershed study in partnership with Washington County to locate actual and potential sources of water pollution and identify options for water quality improvement.
2. New development will not detract from the authentic experience of enjoying Abingdon's most treasured assets, such as the historic Main Street and the Creeper Trail.
2.1. Revise the zoning and subdivision ordinances to strongly promote planned, clustered development that integrates conservation principles into the design of residential and commercial development. 2.2. Amend town ordinances to establish appropriate setbacks and buffers from the Creeper Trail, and other Town trails, that maintain a naturalistic experience for trail users.
3. The protection of natural features and the use of "green" technologies, low-impact development methods and an active bicycle and pedestrian network will establish the town as a development and conservation model for other communities.
3.1. Pursue the installation and maintenance of street trees along the majority of streets to improve aesthetics and provide for the safety and comfort of pedestrians and cyclists. 3.2. Encourage the Town Arborist and the Tree Commission to provide updated lists of preferred tree species, public education materials on the value and proper care of trees, and other information on best urban forestry practices to be provided on the Town's website. 3.3. Study the potential for renewable energy, increased tree planting, and other implementation of green technologies on town-owned building and sites as a community example.

Chapter 9

PUBLIC UTILITIES, FACILITIES, AND SERVICES

CHAPTER 9 - PUBLIC UTILITIES, FACILITIES, AND SERVICES

PUBLIC UTILITIES, FACILITIES, AND SERVICES

- Facts and Figures
  - Sewer
  - Water
  - Public Safety
  - Libraries
  - Schools
  - Health and Social Services
- Opportunities and Issues
  - Public Building Design
- Goals
- Strategies

The public infrastructure, facilities, and services available to residents and businesses are fundamental elements in maintaining and sustaining any community. Public utilities (water, sewer, solid waste management, etc.) are driving factors for community development. Public facilities (schools, parks, libraries, etc.) are important in retaining and attracting residents and businesses. Finally, public services (police, fire and rescue, social services, etc.) are responsible for ensuring safety and providing essential services for living. Abingdon's public utilities, facilities, and services are provided by the town, the county, and by many other service and volunteer organizations.

SEWER

Sewer service and treatment of wastewater is provided by the Town of Abingdon. Most of the town's residential areas are served by sewer, with only a few properties remaining on septic systems in the areas of Nicholas and Trigg Streets. The Town's wastewater system includes a variety of sewer lines, as well as six pump stations and one wastewater treatment facility. In 2006, the town completed expansion of its wastewater treatment facility to 4.95 million gallons per day. This facility serves not only the town, but also designated areas of Washington County subject to a joint agreement. The expanded plant should meet the area's needs until approximately 2027. Another plant expansion to update the equipment and processes is proposed for planning in 2024-2025. The overall capacity of the plant should meet the area's needs until 2042 pending any significant developments or industrial users.

As with many older towns, infiltration and inflow issues can lead to inefficiency in the wastewater system. The Town's west interceptor line

was replaced in 2012 to address these issues, and the east interceptor is actively being monitored and inspected for infiltration and inflow. An updated study of Abingdon's sewer collection system was completed in 2019, with critical inflow and infiltration issues in various watersheds identified and planned for repair.

WATER

Abingdon's public water service is provided by the Washington County Service Authority (WSA). Water is supplied by a 4.6 MGD surface water treatment plant on the Middle Fork of the Holston River (the primary water supply), a 1.1 MGD plant on Mill Creek near Chilhowie (the secondary source), and a spring on Route 58 in Taylor's Valley (supplemental supply source). Based on a 2002 study for the region, the WSA plans to expand the 4.6 MGD plant to 12 MGD by adding a new raw water intake point on the South Fork of the Holston River and pumping it to the Middle Fork water treatment plant.

Water service is available to most streets and populated areas in town. Many of the town's water lines consist of 2-inch, galvanized lines that are prone to corrosion and maintenance issues. In addition, these lines may yield low water pressure and affect the aesthetic quality of the water. (Note: this section has not been updated by the service authority)

PUBLIC SAFETY

The Town of Abingdon operates a police department housed in the Abingdon public safety building on West Main Street. The department employs 25 sworn police officers, as well as 3 full-time and 1 part-time civilian employees.

Fire protection is provided by the Abingdon Fire Department, located in a fire station at 316 Park Street. The department also serves portions of Washington County. The department employs a full-time fire chief and 32 part time fire fighters

Rescue service is provided by the Washington County Lifesaving Crew, a volunteer organization providing emergency services to Abingdon and Washington County. Rescue services are also provided by the Abingdon Ambulance organization.

LIBRARIES

The Town's library, located at the corner of Valley Street and Oak Hill Road, is the main library for the Washington County Public Library system and supports the mission of the Washington County libraries to provide the community with current resources for life-long learning, social exchange, pleasure, and entertainment. The library building was constructed in the 1970s and is in need of expansion to meet the changing needs of library patrons in the town and county.

CHAPTER 9 - PUBLIC UTILITIES, FACILITIES, AND SERVICES

SCHOOLS

Abingdon is served by 5 public schools, two vocational centers, and two higher education facilities. Washington County operates the school programs for grades K-12. The mission of Washington County schools is "to provide a safe, supportive and engaging learning environment which challenges all students to achieve their own maximum potential. In partnership with the family and the community, the school system will ensure that each student acquires basic academic skills and received a diverse array of education opportunities that promote health social, physical and intellectual growth."

Enrollment information on these schools is shown in the table below.
The Neff Center for Science and Technology (1975) offers expanded career and technical training and provides programs in advertising, cosmetology, culinary arts, criminal justice, electronics, nursing, welding, and others. Many of the programs are dual credit programs that are conducted in partnership with participating local colleges.

School	Enrollment 2018-2019, Including PK
Abingdon Elementary	531
Greendale Elementary	330
Watauga Elementary	638
E.B. Stanley Middle School	647
Abingdon High School	869
Washington County Career and Technical Education Center (Neff Center)	605
Virginia Highlands Community College Southwest VA Higher Education Center	>1,000

The Virginia Highlands Community College was established in 1967 and is one of 23 community colleges operating in the Commonwealth of Virginia. It is located on a campus of approximately 100 acres housing six buildings (totaling about 84,000 square feet) and offers programs in nursing and applied health, science and engineering technology, and business, humanities, and social sciences. The Center for Business and Industry provides a niche job-training program for the region as a tool to promote economic development. Buildings are equipped with state-of-the-art technology that enables both on-campus and off-campus learning.

The Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center was established in 1991 to strengthen the economy of the region through workforce training and development. The center offers over sixty graduate and undergraduate degree programs through nine participating colleges and universities. The hi-tech learning center includes a 13,000 square-foot conference facility, 110-person auditorium, and approximately 25 classrooms. The facility is used by both academic institutions and by businesses.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

Abingdon has traditionally been a region center for healthcare. Johnston Memorial Hospital, founded in 1905, was located in downtown Abingdon, just north of East Main Street. Lacking room to expand, a new hospital was built approximately three mile east of downtown in Washington County. The new 116-bed Johnston Memorial Hospital opened in 2011. In 2013 K-VA-T Food Stores, parent company of Food City grocery stores, relocated its corporate operations to the former hospital site.

Social services to regional residents are provided by Washington County Department of Social Services. The department provides a diversity of programs oriented to family investment, child support, employment training, and human services. The agency has adopted a Strategic Plan for 2007-2011 which guides work efforts and programs. Goals are established for fostering employee development, developing community partners, continuously improving the quality of services, improving public relations, and providing needed customer/client services.

OPPORTUNITIES AND ISSUES

PUBLIC BUILDING DESIGN

The Town of Abingdon has a strong interest in preserving the look the Town, as the appearance and character of the town work to attract residents, businesses and tourists in search of a place that differs from typical suburban places found elsewhere, from the architecture of its buildings to the walkability of its streets. For this reason, it is of paramount importance that large new developments, infill projects, and redevelopment efforts all fit with the image of Abingdon. While this does not mean that every new building should imitate the traditional architecture of the downtown, it does mean that the look and scale of any development should be carefully designed to meet the needs and character of the town. To accomplish this, Abingdon should work to develop new, or improve existing, advisory design guidelines that are specific to key areas of the town including entrance corridors, the downtown, key neighborhoods, and other zones.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

1. Abingdon will provide quality, effective, and efficient public facilities, and services to residents.
1.1. Pursue an updated Public Utilities Master Plan to establish the maintenance needs and growth capacity of the Town's water system, and in coordination with the Washington County Service Authority, the Town's sanitary sewer system. 1.2. Continually plan for necessary expansions of public works, administration, and other public services to meet the needs of future Town growth.
2. Public buildings will be exemplary in architecture and reflect best practices for site development while complementing the region's natural features and cultural heritage.
2.1. Require the input of the Town's Board of Architectural Review in the planning and design of any new public building or facility, regardless of the project's location within the Town.
3. The Town government will provide outstanding customer service to citizens and businesses.
3.1. Continue to use social media, among other forms of direct communication, to proactively inform and engage residents in Town government and development issues.
4. Abingdon will continue to be a safe community with high quality public safety services.
4.1. Consider the adequacy and capacity of public safety services when reviewing rezoning, subdivision, site plan, or other development proposals. 4.2. Continue to support the needs of local volunteer fire and rescue agencies to ensure appropriate emergency response times, facilities, and personnel.